"Where there is no vision the people perish"

THE POETRY REVIEW

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▼

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POETS AND PLAYWRIGHTS

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Reflections in Stone

GREY and quiet, with the evening light's
Last tender warmth upon its ruined walls,
In tranquil dignity the Monastry
Waits for the healing dark that falls
Each evening, hiding from rough callous sight
The few great fragments of the Chapter left,
The broken arches and the barren gates,
And the paved, roofless cloisters, all bereft
Now of their grandeur and their loveliness.
The soft veil of dusk that steals across unseen
Brings a seclusion to the crumbling stone
That through the day has borne the sun's white gleam
Pitiless and searching, on its naked ruins,
And lain bare and desolate in a world
Long since passed on into another age,
Its old dying and its dead unyearned.
This sadness that was loneliness beneath
The glare of the broad day slips now away,
And from the ruins rises its eternal
Soul with splendour that cannot decay.
Unweakened by the Dissolution, unharmed
By the fallen stonework, breathing its power
With all the glory of the years that saw
It born and nurtured here, and hour by hour
Burnt with incense and unceasing prayer
Into the sacred stones. That breath of God
That dwelt within the precincts cannot pass,
Nor can the holiness where surely trod
The feet of Christ, and unto eternity
In all its fullness must this gentle air
Rise sacred from the hallowed earth,
Encompassing all about in perfect prayer.

This night, one of a thousand thousand such,
The bats flit by in their unending haste,
And from the corner where the ivy hangs
More heavily in garlands interlaced,
Comes, clear upon the stillness, the owl's hoot,
That wild reverberating cry that holds
So much of distance and unending time
In the emptiness its echoing unfolds.

The haunting call is timeless as the wall
Of grey aged stones from whence it comes, ringing
In a hush that echoes its own silence.
Gone are the busy sounds of day, winging
Upon the light that lies now almost hidden
In the soft distance far beyond the trees.
And with the last farewell of day well said,
The sweetness of the dusk as if to please

More fully, lingers and turns not towards night,
But drifts in softest shadows to the tryst
Where distance meets it, and then on, unseen,
It dreams to the faint stars and paradise.

How often have the ruins watched the dusk
Come, watched till they were part of its sweet breath,
Moulded as one, the stone and grass and stillness,
Years meaning nothing, nor the thought of death.
What sweet tranquility has dwelt about
These quiet acres, and what peace was born
To men, and tenderly and carefully fed
In worlds remote from that wild battle-torn
And sensual tumult that is this strange earth.
Here was there more than men's lives idly moulded;
Deep in the sanctified and powerful spirit
Emanating was there truth unfolded
That raised up to heaven as many souls
As Poor were tended at the precincts gate.
Hope was there for the weary, and the sinner
Was not lost or left as obdurate.
Soft would the vesper bell enjoin the brethren
And the country round to evening prayer,
—As did it not tonight in silence from
The crumbling tower make all about aware
Of vespers hour?—and sweeter still the chanting
Would, as incense and the flickering light
Of altar candles from the chapel windows,
Drift to the listening and absorbing night,
Pouring upon the air the sacred sweetness
Of certain faith and, to the restless heart,
Suggestion of the soul's divine completeness
And immensity, shriven and apart.

How many came to know God here, the stones
Their witness and the grass their resting place?
Sweet is their insistence still, and strong,
Breathing upon the night a prescient grace.

Now is the holy form of life long gone,
The brothers pray not from the quiet cells,
And their soft sandalled tread upon the cloister
Stones has ceased. Only their spirit dwells
With the swift bat and the sad lonely owl
Among the quiet reflections of the past,
More puissant than its Priors thought for then
They did not dream faith would be overcast.
Comes not the Prince upon his pilgrimage,
Nor the Crusader now to make his vows,
Nor kneels the penitent upon this step
Before the altar where the grass now bows.

These walls, the little left, hear not confession
From the lips of kings, nor comes the hour
When sanctuary is sought, and Holy Church
Dispenses mercy and spreads out her power.
These things have passed and comes no seeker for
The transient vision of the Holy Grail,
No barefoot brother with his staff and script,
No knight with cross upon his heavy mail.
Wide stands the empty gate and silent hall,
Tonight within the chapel will not ring
The prior's Benediction, the owl's call
Alone breaks silence, and the swift bat's wing.

Softly the wind stirs the thick clustered ivy,
And the sign suggests the sad regret
Of empty years and lonely desolation
Spent in the long death when men forget
Life other than their own immensity.
Where is the sweet reward of gratitude
For these poor patient walls whose holy life
Was spent in service and beatitude?
Only the ivy wraps its warmth about
The tired, crumbling fragments that yet hold
Themselves erect by some proud strength, and stand
Remembering the glory that they still unfold.

And only the grass kneels on the chancel steps,
And willow herb tends lovelingly the place
Where was the Altar and the Cross of Christ,
Intent that human feet shall not debase.
How do the flowers bow to the sacred spot!
They in their frailty shame the greater minds
That turned from sanctuary and scorned to tread
The Cloister where the way of God unwinds.
Here are the only heads bowed in devotion,
Knowing humility in life and death;
Here is all that lingers of the brethren,
Flowers and grass and echoing ages breath.

None think to worship here, or dare to pass
When dusk has fallen lest they sometime see
A cowled monk walk silent from the gate,
Or in the darkness hear the chanted plea
Of *Agnes Dei* from the empty choir.
Such dreams have those who come not near, nor know
How much of God dwells in a sacred place.
Wild superstition will they let bestow
Strange spectres on a long deserted wall,
And yet will not think that the place of prayer,
Of penance, where the cross was signed more times
A day than words were spoken, may declare

A nearer heaven than they thought to find,
A timelessness in that much dreaded hour,
And such great Presence in its consecration
That pure credence comes, born of its power.
How much they lose that study to avoid
Their own imaginings, and fear to tread
Here lest a strange frocked figure passes by,
Or with the stars lest there should be no bread.
Did not the Novice when he came to take
The Cross upon him throw his life before,
And seeking, follow where it may have gone,
Praying to find it on the Golden Shore?

Only the Reaper leaning on his scythe
Stands by the ruins in the growing dusk,
Resting his aged arms and watching the light
Fade from the tower and the golden husk.

Only he is not afraid to pause
And listen to the echoing owl, for years
Have seen him slowly with the walls grow old,
And if at harvest time he overhears
In the long twilight or the morning mist
High Mass or Vespers sung, he does not cease
His labour but mows on, his swinging blade
Swishing slowly in the silent peace.
Here are no fears for him, the welcome shade
Is all he seeks of the great wall, his soul
Is locked in serenity against the unknown
And finds the quiet field life's aureole.
Was he not reaping in the barley when
The Holy Father led his monks away?
Was there not then that bended figure standing,
And that same rugged face upturned to pray?
Does he still come, the Reaper, as the years
Bring round the harvest, and leaning on the calm
Of dim long centuries the tireless scythe
Sweep in eternally with still strong arm?
I will not ask him lest his timelessness
Falls from his shoulders, or the shadow breaks
Where he last stood, and when I come the place
Is empty, and the treasured peace forsakes
My thirsty soul for common wonderment.
No, I will turn towards the Chapter now,
Reverently treading on the grass fringed nave,
And where bare niches in the wall avow
Saints are our intermediaries pass on,
Much comforted, to the long ruined shrine
That was Our Lady's, where, high on the broken
Wall and in the crevices entwine
Sweet creepers with the ivy, the most fit

Adornment they could place here where her grace
Has long been sought, and her sure intervention
Prayed in untold Rosaries to efface
A world of sin and ever sinning brethren.
Here ends crumbingly the loving wall,
And at the Altar steps, all lichened and
With thyme and thrift bedecked, rises the pall
Of night for reredos from the holy East,
And for High Altar broken stone, time-blest,
And incense, sweetness of the evening, drifts
In on the scarce stirred air, twilight's bequest.

The stillness is omnipotent, and distance,
Half revealed, is surging in upon
The quiet hour. Is it transcended soon,
Lying so near? Or vast, and so long gone
Beyond the reach of this sweet place that we,
Lost, hopeless watchers by an open gate
Strive but to reach where we shall never come,
And seek but where the mists obliterate?
On such a night one cannot dream of bonds
Hemming about in stern simplicity
A little world. Such chains are loosed and life
—Soul Life—leaps out in wild intensity
To cross the distance, that sweet transcience that
Lies quiet here upon the grass and stone
And sweeps unbroken to beyond the stars,
To wander there uncharted and unknown.
So does the soul fly from its bondage here,
leaving the frail human form that kneels
Bowed and encumbered on the altar step,
And casting its fetters in a moment steals,
Winged with the yearning for Divine absorption,
Into the limitless, the timeless, where
Comes nothing of the darkened world of Man,
But only his diviner soul in prayer.
Here is there no thought; indissolubly
The ruined walls merge with the distant places
Of Eternity, and their sweet calm
Is breathing from a heaven that embraces
Stone and stars . . . and I cannot but drift
To silence and sweet subjugation, shown
By all about me I must make my shrift,
My soul loosed wide, and not in search alone.

Michal J. Eastcott.

The Sussex Weald

I

HERE Earth and Man still keep that ancient truce
Which cedes a province to his vassal hand,
And all the days are sweet where none abuse
The ancient virtue of this fruitful land.
Though man may reap only what Earth shall yield—
To fill the barn or leave him hungering—
And, of his crops, sun-ripened in the field,
Not he but she prescribes the harvesting,
Yet is he well-content, for Nature's ways
Rob no man of his true serenity,
When storm his wheat in sodden ruin lays
He is not cheated save by destiny;
And when his barn is bursting full with grain
No brother's loss is measured by his gain.

II

His feet are firmly set upon this soil
This stubborn clay that quickened for his birth,
But which, for living, claims a life of toil
Till Death restores it once again to Earth.
So he is one with her, no overlord
To loll at ease upon her patient breast,
But husbandman, eager for what reward
His sweat shall merit of her interest.
And both are part of one eternal plan
Where nothing is but cause and consequence
Measured and weighed beyond the ken of man,
But purposed by the hand of Providence;
Which, in due season, to the scythe shall bring
Man's generations to God's harvesting.

III

Peace lingers like a bloom upon the Weald
And life demands no reassurance here
Where is no grief nor bitterness unhealed,
And the day's chances hold no taint of fear.
And Time goes tardy-footed where the lane
Meanders still to meet with no reproof,
Lingering for unwasted years to stain
With rarer moss a humble cottage roof.
And men are wise, with little scholarship,
Where every hedge is steeped in ancient lore,
Weighing their words long moments on the lip
That they may speak their thought and no word more;
Content to tread anew an oft-trod way
To-morrow as to-day and yesterday.

H. W. Harding.

"*Equilibrium*"

WE should eliminate the term "realism" from our critical vocabulary, for in practically every instance where it is used it is merely dogma insisting that a part equals the whole. In its stead, let us pursue the ideas of "concordance", "discordance" and "equilibrium", for one of the essentials of the debate between the so-called modernist artist and the so-called status-quo group lies in the existence of the theme of the former that all is not concordance in that discordance plays the prime role; that, the modernist usually says, is "realism". But discordance without an ultimate equilibrium or a failure to attain equilibrium is tragedy and confusion. In the basic premise of the existence of discordance, we agree; however, in the very nature of things, concordance must be superior to discordance in that the ultimate objective of this vying of strengths lies in existence which is somewhat synonymous with equilibrium. The healthy heart pictured on the cardiograph shows this varying contest and the conquering of concordance by existence. Also the law of indestructibility of matter revitalizes this idea.

To say that nature dotes on discordance more than on concordance is to say that the ultimate objective of universal affairs is chaos. This is absurd in that the universe, if there be a universe, continues. The process is destruction and construction—integration and disintegration, with existence forever dominating. Quite evidently nature dotes on equilibrium which is in essence the momentary *status-quo* preceding change—or the passing through the point or moment that insists on becoming.

You may deny the generality "ultimate objective". I shall not attempt to defend it beyond pointing out the continuing reoccurrence of equilibrium. The entire universal scheme from good and evil throbs like the aforementioned heart beat; light and dark, heat and cold, the rising and falling, star movements, the cyclical seasons, the Malthusian law of population, and always the flood seeks its own level and equilibrium. Each contrary element brings about a balancing of forces and hence that infinitesimal point of time—equilibrium.

Perhaps you ask, How does all of this apply to literature? Simply in that it applies to the two-legged microbe of the universe, man. His heart beat, his respiration, his falling down and recovery motion called walking, his cycles or "seasons", life and death. Man, his work and leisure, joy and sorrow, aspiration and despair must continue to be the basis of all literature in that man is entirely incapable of becoming so objective that he may give us the "thing itself"—the rootless text, the sound beyond the human ear, untinged with its relationships to himself and his perspective. Words and their connotations are man's, ideas are hopelessly harnessed to man. How then is this disassociation accomplished? In fact a complete disassociation of literature from man would be a disassociation from literature in that it could not be. Here the modernist errs in that by his anarchistic disassociation of his work from man he succeeds and thereby fails.

Pope tells us that the great artists "imitate" nature. The word "imitate" leaves one cold; nevertheless, his statement is basically sound in that literature must be natural—the complement of things or essences that are.

If then, we accept the fact that existence or equilibrium is the object constantly resought through the contraries—concordance and discordance, then literature, to be natural, must attain or strive for a semblance of equilibrium or a balancing through the same interplay, and it is this combat of the forces that lends the element of the dramatic and an appreciation of the cosmos.

It is granted that a perfect harmony and a perfect rhythm on this earth would

defeat themselves. We would call it monotony, but it is even worse, as it approaches "nothing". The most graceful runner in his falling down and recovery motion cannot attain a complete concordance though he must continuously pass through the point equilibrium. A man standing still has not attained it, nor lying down, for the varying vibratory actions of life continue. Then perhaps with the cease of the heart beat and respiration we have momentarily accomplished or passed through this struggle to perfect concordance. But that you say is death. Right, it is confusion as far as life is concerned, but on the other hand, forgetting life and man, it may be a passing into the universal scheme of complete and continuing equilibrium—a Nirvana, perhaps. However, the interacting, re-energizing counterplay here considered is the very essence of life or man and the world in which he finds himself. This perfection is ever sought, but never attained, and unquestionably a depiction of this failure is artistic.

Literature must appreciate this great and continuing struggle for a passing equilibrium through depicting the essences of this struggle—the light and the dark. I believe that all great artists have subconsciously been aware of these simple facts. Certainly Shakespeare was. Discordance temporarily triumphs, and we have tragedy. A continuing domination of discordance or concordance and we have either confusion or "nothing". An interplay and we have an honest picture, perhaps "realism".

To a great extent the way the terms "concordance", "discordance" and "equilibrium" are used here parallel the political terms "conservative", "radical" and "liberal". You will note that the liberal is the tight-rope walker and balancer of the world's problems; he it is who strives for a continuing re-occurrence of equilibrium. In the ideal sense he seeks a retention of the good and the elimination of the bad. The radical tears down or blows up while the conservative hugs *status-quo* and screams for aid. If I were called on to define these three factions in general terms, I would do so somewhat as follows: A conservative strives to retain the *status-quo*—the "as is" and apparently is entirely ignorant of the incorruptibility of the laws of change and selection; a radical is an individual, supreme in ego in that he would tear up roots that have taken 6,000 years of recorded history and a myriad of millenniums of unrecorded history to grow; for he would create a "new" and a "better" state from his own limited theoretic vision without reference to the proofs of the past that depict the innate human blindnesses and weaknesses—thus we are always faced with a smoldering French Revolution with all of its anomolies. A liberal is essentially filled with humility; he (a) accepts the roots of the past as probably the best possible roots considering the foibles and weaknesses of "poor humanity", and (b) realizes the push of the cumulative force of the laws of change and selection, and (c) would do all in his power to control the law of change to reduce human woe, and (d) maintains that the future may be guided only through a scraping of the barnacles from the growth of the past and not by their destruction. As the pendulum swings, the liberals' point of equilibrium is always in the minority as the majority lies in either the great swing to the left or to the right. The liberal says, if the tree fails to produce the perfect fruit, we should not follow the radical or proponent of discordance who would cut it down and wave his wand of confusion to produce a better fruit than fruit trees can produce.

How then may we judge or diagnose literature? Literature, as such, is not a treatise to prove a dogma. The "leftist modern", as any other artist, must carry the bulwarks of the future by his works and not by his footnotes and prove while creating and not by destroying or explaining his "profound" theories. The rigid

status-quo individual is either a literary weakling or merely blindly pursuing his own particular antithetical dogma. Poetry must have nothing to do with dogma. It may be "truth and beauty" or their contraries as foils to depict their opposites, the overflow of emotion both through recollection and the establishment of the "now" or merely the sublime realization of a universal idea. It may bring laughter, tears or astonishment; but it must not be an integral element of controversy as it is itself an image of the great controversy noted. It is sound, complete in itself, and is sheared directly from this life we live and this earth we inhabit. Artificiality, dogma, debate, sermonizing—as such, have no place in its purest form, for a true poem has a self-sufficiency in imagism of this eternal debate between concord and discord and the fleeting resultant.

CULLEN JONES.

*Gaudeamus Igitur**

SORROW leans above the sea,
Sorrow broods above the land,
They ring the bells for victory
But why I do not understand.

At Alamein and Longstop Hill,
When wounds defaced the decent skin,
To shatter the impregnable,
They sent us torn and bleeding in.
Gaudeamus igitur, iuvenes dum sumus.

We fought across the English skies
That were as blue as flowers in corn,
And weariness lay on our eyes
Until we wished we were not born.
Gaudeamus igitur, iuvenes dum sumus.

When poking searchlights probed the clouds
To find the bombers coming in,
When dead men lay with stones for shrouds,
We went to bring the wounded in.
Gaudeamus igitur, iuvenes dum sumus.

We bore the wounds and saw the sights
God never meant a man to see,
But youth, the season of delights
The hour of love, must bear and see.
Gaudeamus igitur, iuvenes dum sumus.

We fought in the saltness of the air,
The cold and darkness of the sea,
With danger months and years to bear
For Freedom, and we are not free.
Gaudeamus igitur, iuvenes dum sumus.

Elizabeth Meldrum.

Late Blossom

YOUR lovely youth was never for my knowing:
When winds of April blew about your ears
And dashed bright raindrops from the trees like tears
To crown your shining head, the live hair flowing—
My love, my love, this was not for my knowing!

Your summer's grace was not yet for my seeing:
A rose's fragile strength that scents the air
Could not have been more fair than you were fair,
Whose slender limbs were wrought from Beauty's being—
My love, my love, but not yet for my seeing!

September brought you on a golden morning,
When autumn mists lay captive in your eyes:
Ah, then we knew past doubt, with glad surprise,
That Life was won, and Time was for our scorning—
My love, my love, upon a golden morning!

What path you tread, shall Spring not follow after?
Though Winter lay his hand upon your brow,
Your glorious youth is here, your April now,
You who have filled my heart with tears and laughter—
My love, my love, shall Spring not follow after?

Theodora Rose.

The Dying Sailor

"HOW can I die", he said, "since it is writ,
In the new heaven there is no more sea?
How can I win content remembering it
Beating within my heart continuously"?
And then, it seemed, the voice of waiting Death
Spoke to him, saying, very tenderly:
"Mountains are lifted by the hand of faith,
May not you also, brother, move the sea"?
Then there was silence, till suddenly we heard—
We watchers—through the quiet of the room,
The rushing of great waters, and the stirred
Sands moving, and the surf and spume
Scattering in spray. Then, in our wondering ears,
Sounded the suck and surge of waves that rose
And towered upwards, foaming unto spheres
Beyond our knowing, whence there blows
Fraught with strange fragrance, no returning breeze.

Once more came silence, broken by no breath,
For he had sailed on these resurgent seas,
Borne on swept tides, and piloted by death.

Celia Randall.

Sir Philip Sidney as Poet

IF the publication of Surrey's "Songs and Sonnets" in 1557 was one "milestone" in the progress of English poetry, the appearance of Sidney's sonnet sequence "Astrophel and Stella" some forty years later would be considered by literary historians as another. Sir Sidney Lee, for instance, says that "a sonneteering race began in Elizabethan England" after Sidney's poems had come out, and goes on to list some of the "many volumes of sonnet-sequences which owed much to the incentive of "Astrophel and Stella". But merely to note the general characteristics of Sidney's style and methods and then pass on to Spenser's "Amoretti" or Shakespeare's sonnets as more interesting is, perhaps, yielding to the anthologiser's weakness rather than true appreciation. The "Defence of Poesie" is so well established as a critical set piece that one wonders what Sidney's own showing as a poet amounts to.

In the "Defence" Sidney writes: "This purifying of wit, this enriching of memory, enabling of judgment and enlarging of conceit which commonly we call learning . . . the Final end is, to lead and draw us to as high a perfection as our degenerate souls, made worse by their clay lodgings, can be capable of . . ." "Astrophel and Stella" attempts an analysis of love starting from that Platonic background:

"That Plato I have read for nought, but if he tame
Such coltish years . . ."

and the argument is conducted in a manner which derives a good deal from a training in the classics and rhetoric. This is evident in the neat logical sequences which carry the matter of the first sonnet of the series forward:

"Pleasure might cause her read, reading might make her know
Knowledge might pity win, and pity grace obtain."

And again in the twenty-fourth:

"For me I nature every deal do know,
And know great causes great effects
And know those bodies high reign on the low
And if those rules did fall, proof makes me sure . . ."

Such methods of procedure which are clearly the work of one with a bent towards philosophy might lead us to describe Sidney as a "philosophic" poet, using the term "philosophic" in much the same way as we do the word "metaphysical" when talking of Donne or Marvell. This would not be correct, though. As a rule in Donne the personal experience, imagined or actual, which occasions the poem, counts for more than the metaphysical doctrines or concepts from which he draws images, and so forth. One seldom finds a convincing personal note in Sidney. The sonnet thirty-one;

"With how sad steps o Moon thou clims't the skies"

is sometimes given as one of his most moving pieces. But it is really nothing more than the aching lover's address to an impartial object, the moon, as a means of discovering the conventional cause of lovers' woe, Cupid;

". . . even in heavenly place
That bush archer his sharp arrows tryes."

The next three or four lines make play with alliteration and stock epithets:

"Sure if that long-with-love acquainted eyes
Can judge of love, thou feelst of lovers case
I read within thy looks thy languisht grace."

But line eight surely betrays the poet entirely:

"To me that feel the like, my state discries,"

because if he really "felt" he would not advertise the fact explicitly. But actually on the score of dealing with the experience Sidney is inferior to Donne in practically every respect. In the well-known sonnet in the text of "Arcadia" beginning:

"My true love hath my heart and I have his
By just exchange one to the other given"

the idea of the exchange is merely repeated over and over again with slight variations of metaphor in balanced phrases either side a pause in the centre of each line: "His heart in me, keeps me and him in one,
My heart in him, his thoughts and senses guide."

Donne's procedure in "Lovers Infiniteness" is more subtle. A similar idea, that of a bargain, is presented:

" no more can be due to me
Than at the bargain made was meant";

but a progression forward to a logical conclusion is made:

"But we will have a way more liberal
Than changing hearts, to joyne them so we shall
Be one and one anothers all ."

While Sidney's material rides easily in its frame and remains, as it were, in a single key, Donne offers a satisfying development. The comparison is not perhaps entirely fair because "Lovers Infiniteness" is over twice as long as Sidney's sonnet (although each stanza is of the same length and pattern). Donne is often spoken of as representing the anti-Petrarchan spirit tilted at in Herbert's lines

"Is it no verse except enchanted groves
And sudden arbours shadow coarse-spun lines?"

But Sidney himself must have realised the danger of following earlier models too closely; he wrote in the fifteenth sonnet of "Astrophel":

"You that dictionary methods bring
Into your rymes, running in rattling rowes,
You that old Petrarch's long deceased woes
With new born signs, and wits disguised sing":

But he never transcended the habits of mind which his acquaintance with the French and Italian traditions established. It was impossible for a poet with his background and training to approach his experiences with the vigour and flexibility of Donne or Marvell. He moves with heaviness and caution and exploits the recognised posture of the literary lover:

"Loving in truth, and fain my love verse to show
That the dear she might take some pleasure in my pain."

Whether he is really loving "in truth" is, of course, not for him to say: but the phrase "the dear she" and the idea of the loved one taking some pleasure in the lover's dejection strikes a note of falsity straight away (this is the opening sonnet of the series). When however Sidney says that in order to help on his own expression he has to resort to

" turning other leaves, to see if thence would flow
Some fresh and fruitful shower upon my sunburnt brain",

the absurdity of the "sunburnt" brain image is not even needed to establish the crudity of his ideal. Most of the poems are full of borrowings both in thought and actual diction. We meet the "heavy wings of love", the loved one's eyes as "spheres of beauty", the lover's neck as a "yoke of tyranny", Cupid the "blind hitting boy" and so forth. As for the "philosophy of love", which the poems are said to present this manifests itself rather as a series of random reflections than as a rounded argument.

Occasionally there are touches of originality of expression which give some interest to Sidney's work and invite comparison with Shakespeare on the one hand and Donne on the other. The thirty-ninth sonnet begins:

"Dear, why make you more of a dog than me?"

this interrogative being mildly startling in much the same way as Donne's "Out upon it, I have loved . . ." is; and a similar colloquial tone and rhythm is used. But this does not supersede the polished balance of:

"If he wait well, I never thence would move
If he be fair, yet but a dog can be:"

And only in the last lines (where the word "clog" is entirely unexpected) does anything remotely approaching the metaphysical wit appear—the body of the poem being loaded with literary counters. These are the concluding lines:

"Alas, if you grant only such delight
To witless things, the love I hope (since wit
Becomes a clog) will soon ease me of it":

they are rhythmically as well as intellectually an advance on the staple of Sidney's verse. These felicities (like "your *rubarbe* wordes" in sonnet fourteen) are, unfortunately, only to be met with occasionally; ready-made and outworn phrases occur with much greater frequency.

So few years elapsed between the publication of "Astrophel and Stella" and the appearance of Shakespeare's sonnets that Shakespeare must surely have known them. The difference in attitude noticeable in the two poets is as striking as the dissimilarity of their technical achievements and ambitions. In Shakespeare we still have the address to a mistress: but the kind of love avowed is less self-centred and aims to make a connection with the world outside the lovers themselves. Hence the insistence on the desirability of "consummating" the union which is touched on in the very first line of the first sonnet:

"Of fairest creatures we desire increase",

where the more mature "we" replaces "Fain would I" in Sidney's first sonnet. Shakespeare dispenses almost entirely with the Petrarchan paraphernalia (Cupid, Mars, etc.) and substitutes a most intimate and serious concern with the things which over-ride mere poetry—Time, Nature, "Birth-Copulation-Death", the Seasons and so forth. It would be unnecessary to demonstrate Shakespeare's technical superiority to Sidney's: the latter at his best never produced any image to equal "Bare ruined choirs (where late the sweet birds sang)" or (from one of the lesser known sonnets): "[Beaten and chop't with] tanned antiquity".
The rhythmical vitality manifest in a passage like (115)

"change decrees of kings
To sacred beauty, blunt the sharp'st intents,
Divert strong minds to the course of altering things",

is throughout much more arresting than Sidney's formal, cautious movement. An extended comparison with Shakespeare would probably damn Sidney entirely in most people's estimation. Perhaps the fairest thing to do is to recognise that Sidney seems to have moved in one emotional orbit and judge his achievement as poet in the light of that.

E. D. Mackerness.

Robert Frost: An Appreciation

ADMIRERS of Robert Frost have indulged for years in undertones of lament that his following in England should be so scanty. In America he has won three Pulitzer prizes and the gold medal of the National Academy of Arts and Letters (an honour conferred on a poet only three times in the Academy's history), but in England the generation of Auden and Day Lewis, with the noteworthy exception of the poets themselves, passed him by.

None of this need occasion any surprise. Not only is Frost an old-stager who can safely be disregarded, but a member of a hopeless minority as well. England is possibly more European in ideal than ever before in her history and her left-wing intellectuals intent on a new internationalism based upon the common elements of a European working-class—a working-class whose essential unit is the mass-production factory-worker. Most of this is meaningless to Robert Frost. He belongs to an older English tradition, now all but extinct, a tradition which was always insufficiently represented among English poets—that of the craftsman-poet. Frost is (or was) a farmer, a philosopher and a quietist. In England (as distinct from Scotland, where Hogg, the Ettrick shepherd, can hardly be forgotten) there was for centuries a rift between the poet and the hard fact of work with the hands. In the prelude to the Second World War, when the position was reversed and it was courting disaster for a poet to be other than a shop-steward, a proletarian, an apocalyptic or a working-class visionary, that gap closed too late. It is unlikely, despite the efforts of William Morris, Eric Gill and H. J. Massingham, that more than a minute fraction of the world to come will ever know much of the dignity and wisdom of craftsmanship and the mastery of material.

We ought then to be the more grateful for the survival of Robert Frost. He is a direct spiritual descendant of the backwoodsman of the seventeenth century. In him is all that gloomy fondness for ordinary things, the stern sardonic eye, the quixotic laughter and the essential reverence for and earnestness about the earth which characterised the early Puritans of New England. He is, in fact, the original angular, silent American who drew his philosophy from his fathers and matched it, every day and every hour, with what he saw. 'We love the things we love for what they are' he muses in 'Hyla Brook'. There are no superficials. Everything has a place and a meaning, if you know how to work it out, and that meaning comes easier very often from things than from people.

This technique of thought did not spring immediately from Puritanism. It is old now, old with the age of New England, which is to the rest of America a strange cramped soil, full of ghosts and history, but it was not evolved by the first generation of uprooted settlers.

> 'The land was ours before we were the land's.
> She was our land more than a hundred years
> Before we were her people.
> Something we were withholding made us weak
> Until we found it was ourselves
> We were withholding from our land of living'.

There is the point. It took the third and fourth generation of New Englanders before they loved the land as Frost loves it, withholding nothing. No longer were they 'England's, still colonials'. They were Americans.

Such love had to be accompanied, and indeed preceded by, work. Out of this work springs the poetry of Robert Frost, poetry in which work is not merely the peg on which to hang a dream or a wish, not merely the impetus for some expedition into fantasy, but a fact in itself worthy of detailed and affectionate observation.

In this alone it is unique. It cuts off from appreciation all those who like a garnish of rural herbs on the otherwise delicate imagining of the poet but who prefer the quick overheated tempo of the town. There are still more genuine countrymen in America than in England; and despite the curious, almost archaic nature of the land north of Boston, Frost's accuracy, slowness and fondness for unprogressive contemplation make him, almost alone among contemporaries, a countryman among countrymen and understandable among his fellows. He is at one with simplicity in that he rarely tries to make something more difficult, or clever, or merely different, out of what he sees. He is content to enjoy the thing itself

'The fact is the sweetest dream that labour knows.
My long scythe whispered and left the hay to make'.

More than ever recently, however, the Englishman has had little time for Robert Frost. His detachment has become annoying. When he writes

'But even where thus opposing interests kill,
They are to be thought of as opposing goods
Oftener than as conflicting good and ill;
Which makes the war god seem no special dunce
For always fighting on both sides at once',

those on this side of the water, with blood still curdling at the noise of war, may feel justifiably that this shows all the clever shortsightedness of parish-pump oratory. Too many people, however, infer that by the use of the term 'parish pump' they have automatically discharged the argument into the ludicrous. What is above doubt is Frost's integrity: and integrity, beginning in self and extending through all that is seen and heard and said in the narrow compass of a New England countryside, even though it never extend beyond the parish pump, is infinitely more enduring than can be the welter of half-digested so-called-progressive ideas, culled from the radio, the papers and from other people, for which most of us give ourselves undue credit. Frost the man, the farmer and the poet are one. And if our rabid patriots jump at his isolationism, the ivory tower he builds (if indeed he either would or could build in any such material) is hewn out of his own integrity, piece by piece, growing in every moment of life lived. His craftsmanship would meet assaults upon itself, physical or spiritual, with a more durable resolution than would all of our overnight workers' paradises. He may have lost the world, but he has kept his own soul.

For all that, to those separated by town or distance from him, he needs a lot of understanding. His arid, unemotional style reflects naturally the round of a labour still strange to most of us. The ordinary reader would be at a loss to point anything "poetic" in any single line of many of his poems. Yet with deliberate flatness his work grows, much as the rural scene does, into a rounded sober loveliness. Where he attempts to apply this method to subjects outside the realm of his natural ken, his failure is more apparent. 'The Discovery of the Madeira Islands', for instance, which his publishers describe as one of the greatest of his narrative poems, is far too cold and unemotional ever to recapture the red leaping sun of the African latitudes and the fierce blood and laughter of Hakluyt's fourteenth century seamen. One might almost as well ask that William Prynne or the men of Scrooby and New Plymouth should usurp the task of Froude. Both types, the hot fighter and the cold sufferer (even to the third and fourth generation), have their courage, but they scarcely understand one another.

'And the bay where his stolen lady died
Was named for him instead of her.
But so is history like to err.

And soon it is neither here nor there
Whether time's rewards are fair or unfair'.

Such detachment is perhaps the unfair reward of time. It has the lack of feel (rather than feeling) from which the hard-bitten Puritan ejects always suffered. And if Frost's differences now are personal and intellectual rather than sectarian and fanatical, he has not lost the angular inability of his forefathers to imagine life on a broader and shallower, more erratic basis. He would have done better to rejoin, as did the Massachusetts farmer to Herman Melville when the latter was trying to warm the narrow-parish assembly to tales of Typee and the Southern Seas, 'Brother, we know nothing of that here'.

We are on much safer and more interesting ground back in Vermont and New Hampshire. Frost knew his farmers and their silences as few can know them. The greater part of his technique is the deliberate building of the conversation-drama, dependent as much upon what is not said as upon what is. Drama which is so understated as the constant use of natural conversation can make it never falls into the overrich satire of 'Desire under the Elms' or the ridicule of 'Cold Comfort Farm'. Edward Thomas, who was Frost's friend and disciple,wrote of him: 'He has trusted his conviction that a man will not easily write better than he speaks when some matter has touched him deeply'. Only so could a man of imagination have achieved some of the awkward restraints and commonplaces that fill his poems with sincerity.

Naturally then, what concessions he makes to more orthodox poetic method are often misplaced in such surroundings. In 'The Death of the Hired Man', to me one of the most moving of his longer poems, the farmer's wife closes her injunction to her husband thus: 'I'll sit and see if that small sailing cloud
Will hit or miss the moon'

an ending completely out of keeping with the stubborn normality of the occasion.

'Whether in direct speech or in simple description, Frost's poetry was like a man speaking' wrote Paul Engle. Superficially this may seem an unwise constraint, but that it often succeeded the following passage from 'The Death of the Hired Man' will show.

'Part of a moon was falling down the west,
Dragging the whole sky with it to the hills.
Its light poured softly in her lap. She saw
And spread her apron to it. She put out her hand
Among the harp-like morning-glory strings,
Taut with the dew from garden bed to eaves,
As if she played unheard the tenderness
That wrought on him beside her in the night.
'Warren', she said, 'he has come home to die:
You needn't be afraid he'll leave you this time'.

'Home', he mocked gently.
'Yes, what else but home?
It all depends on what you mean by home.
Of course he's nothing to us, any more
Than was the hound that came a stranger to us
Out of the woods, worn out upon the trail'.

'Home is the place where, when you have to go there,
They have to take you in'.

I find Robert Frost's most recent volume 'A Witness Tree', less satisfying than 'North of Boston', 'West-Running Brook' and other earlier works. He is leaving his parish, and as a citizen of the world he is considerably less comfortable. The simplicity only achievable by a man of taste and intellect has been so long a veil that the complex artistry behind the simple Vermont farmer is too easily forgotten. Now, however, that veil is lifting. The academic mind is looking out. The close-grained way of arguing that sprang so really from the wood in men and things, the old-type English understatement of his conclusions, are still there but are applied at one remove—a move out into the world. Where in 'The Axe-Helve' the niggling affectionate reiteration of Baptiste and the slow turns of the argument seem to emerge literally from the grain of the wood he stroked as he talked, in 'A Witness Tree' this close-grained method is too often switched to topics that have no immediate roots in rural life. Robbed of its detail, the effect is academic only. In 'All Revelation' some of the more annoying characteristics of this particularity appear:

'A head thrusts in as for the view,
But where it is it thrusts in from
Or what it is it thrusts into
By that Cyblaean avenue,
And what can of its coming come
And wither it will be withdrawn,
And what take hence or leave behind,
These things the mind has pondered on
A moment and still asking gone.
Strange apparition of the mind!'

There is little about the book to indicate that the poems in it are generally of later date than those previously published. One even goes back as far as 1900. Probably most of them were written at least before the war. One might hazard a guess that many of them the poet himself felt to be less satisfactory because of their rootlessness. In any case, there are too many bits and pieces: there is less and less about the farm and the countryside, little more really than could have been written by an occasional visitor, and too much general philosophy. Frost has become the don under a very thin disguise.

Although this has seriously affected the application and success of his previous method, his poetry may be evolving slowly into a different stage. That is certainly not beyond his powers. But above all, he has not lost his integrity. He may be academic rather than bucolic, but he has not lost his New England soul. Unhurried as ever, he can still write a beautiful little lyric like 'Come In', worthy in every way to rank with 'Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening', 'Tree at my Window' and other poems of his already established in the anthologies. In a more Elizabethan manner he has set up at the head of his latest work 'The Silken Tent':

'She is as in a field a silken tent
At midday when a sunny summer breeze
Has dried the dew and all its ropes relent,
So that in guys it gently sways at ease,
And its supporting central cedar pole,
That is its pinnacle to heavenward
And signifies the sureness of the soul,
Seems to owe naught to any single cord,
But strictly held by none, is loosely bound
By countless silken ties of love and thought

To everything on earth the compass round,
And only by one's going slightly taut
In the capriciousness of summer air
Is of the slightest bondage made aware'.

This is not without worth as a commentary upon Frost himself. Few men have valued as he 'the sureness of the soul', and few have owed less, in poetry or philosophy, to 'any single cord'.

ROLAND MATHIAS.

Leaning Over an Old Wall

LEANING over an old wall, gazing
Into a dark pool, waiting like a moonling to see
Only the water-traffic, fish and frogs,
I saw my image stare at me
Of its own will, appraising.

Suddenly a voice spoke from a stone
In the bed of the pool,
Saying : We are the pebbles on the path you tread.
We are the tomb's substance.
We pillow your head.
We are the cold heart that weeps alone.
We are all these things, the stone said.

A willow moaned : I am your despair.
I am your unrest and your grieving,
Your tears that have been and those that are to be.
I am your unbelieving
And the wanhope of your days, said the tree.

And the roots of the willow, lying
Under the bed of the pool were crying :
We are the writhen cords that feed this tree
Which is your being's clay-bound entity.
We are the filaments that fed your birth.
From your wanton seed
Into the quickening earth
Tendons of impulse lead.

And the green reeds sang : This is the voice
Of your life's joy.
We are the thoughts that spring
Succulent from your heart. We fling
Our arms to the sky, bidding the sun rejoice,
And the clouds sing.

Muriel Spark.

*Lux in tenebris lucet**

To Lotus

DEEP, deep within me rise
Voices which cry out, clamour for a form,
The weft and warp of words, rich webs of poesy,
Spell-woven nets to cast upon the swarm
Of wild-swan fancies milling secretly
Like princes in disguise.

But sad, sweet pain;
These unborn poems, rare imaginings,
Which flock around my heart like silent birds
Lifting me up upon a surge of wings,
Live but a moment in the cage of words
And then are free again.

O they are gone from me,
For in this life, with duties overprest
When every moment is a glory lost,
(Glories too fleet for Mem'ry's palimpsest),
The life I lead is life at too high cost,
My Muse abandons me.

Euterpe, hear thou me!
Quicken once more in me the sacred fire;
Breathe on my faded embers, that a spark
Of thy divinity may so inspire
These words of mine, that they may light the dark
Of blind Humanity.

For O the world is blind:
Its people wander in a night of woe
From which all stars have vanished, all save One
And that One they reject. Yea they would go
Down the long road or Life and Death alone
Leaving the Light behind.

Who shall prevent their fate?
Who but the makers of fine orat'ry,
Philosophers, priests and poets—all who keep
Undimmed the vision of the inner eye.
O rouse ye, seers, arouse them from their sleep,
But haste, the hour grows late.

The hour is late indeed,
And dark and ever darker grows the night
Which is upon the world in its distress.
Yet, saving grace, there still are points of light,
Lights which are not extinguished in the press
Of anger, fear and greed.

O see them how they shine!
As on a night of darkness and few stars
The few shine forth with greater brilliance,
These living lights which Earth nor makes nor mars
Shine forth the brighter for their circumstance
With radiance divine.

Serene amid the strife
Which sunders nations; with no wind of doubt
Eddying round their faith's calm candle-flame,
To make it stream and flare, but lapped about
With power and peace they shew forth in His Name
The real, the inner life.

* * *

Deep silence in my heart. . . .
But in the quietness a Voice I heard,
More certain, more compelling than mine own:
"These souls are they who have received the Word,
Perceive His Glory, live in Him alone,
And theirs the better part.

Take comfort, troubled soul,
For though thy world lies shattered in thy sight
It yet is not abandoned, is not lost.
Hold on to Faith and tend thine own small light,
And for the rest—I, I have borne the cost,
And I will make them whole.

I work by unseen art,
By methods numberless the Truth to show;
And from the few whose lives are truly Mine
Love, Wisdom, Healing, Peace shall outward flow,
Until not few but countless stars shall shine,
Each one a human heart".

M. W. F. Longlands.

Joy

You speak of your deep joy. How can this be?
Witnessing joy in you, I do not see
It lie ten fathoms deep. But rather in the skies
I see your joy, which slips the earth and flies
To paradise.

Minnesota, U.S.A. JANIS PALLISTER.

The ★ attached to certain titles indicates Highly Commended Premium Poems.

Before Spring

I HAVE known this time before,
this soft grey, shell-smooth cup of evening,
cool to the touch,
and filled with nebulous remembering.
Air holds me tenderly,
as though I were a flower,
or a child.
This is a moment I have known before.
The dream is treacherous;
Voices cry, Speak! Act! Live! Decide!
But I, diffused and dumb, dream on . . .
I, who would fill the hollows of the world with love,
can only stare at my reflection in the window
while decision fades, and the most cool,
most delicate of evenings
leaves me scattered, like torn petals,
to be swept away by anything that moves.

Joan Ogden.

*How Did You Die, Young Soldier . . ?**

HOW did you die, young soldier,
That walked so fair and free
With faith on fire within you
And half life yet to be?

Did you go out like lamplight,
With blackness in the brain,
Or did the world clamp round you
Its bright, hard shell of pain?

Or did you lay down gladly
The fever and the sweat,
And take the leaden pellet
And slumber and forget?

Or sprang the ambushed panic
To clutch a comrade's sleeve,
And see his eyes still living,
And babble of reprieve?

Did you have time to think, man,
And wonder was it worth
To stain with crimson sweetness
The bitterness of earth?

Did you have thoughts of homeland?
Or did you curse your luck,
And wonder what had hit you,
And flounder in the muck?

Where are you now, young soldier?
  Or shall we never know?—
We who stood by unchosen
  And cheered to watch you go.

But died you fain or laggard,
  You found and paid the fee
The laws of man demanded
  To set your fellow free.

'Tis not your fault, young soldier—
  Though God knows who's to blame—
For all your fine free giving
  The world looks much the same.

John Rolf.

*Prayer of the Dying**

JESUS, my Saviour, of the Sorrowing Heart,
Look down in pity on my pain-wracked frame.
Thou wert so fashioned, but for sin apart,
Bone of our bone and suffering flesh the same.

When the false shadows of drugged sleep are gone,
And on closed eyes I feel the breath of Pain,
And I must face the Torturer alone
In this dim room, my torture-cell again,

Show me the vision of Gethsemane,
The suffering that made Thy sweat as blood,
For healing of a soul-sick world,—and me,—
Bringing to birth for man the love of God.

If I must tread the Valley's treacherous way,
Show me the Light beyond my Calvary;
That through my darkness, some may see the day,
And learn Thy patience from my agony.

J. G. Marash.

A NOTABLE CHRONICLE PLAY

Apropos the appeal of poetic plays, may I suggest that there are many not actually written in verse but are yet rich in the quality of poetry both in their language and in the treatment of their theme. As an example of these I would like to mention "Godiva of Coventry," by J. G. Marash, recently published by Harrap (2/-) which also contains some beautiful lyrics expressing the early sufferings of this pitifully destroyed town. The old story is given freshness and strength, and the religious background of the time well understood.

Chesham. EVELYN D. BANGAY.

Poets and Pretenders

THE difficulty of poetic criticism, and probably the honest analysis of any creative artistic work, is that if one indulges in personalities an error in taste is held to have been committed, if no breach of the law of libel, while if one eschews them effective criticism is hardly possible. For creative work is mainly a matter of character, and the important defects observable in such work flow from faults in the author, to comment candidly upon which would certainly expose the critic to legal action. Only in a relatively minor degree does the intellect or, in painting, the craft, enter into the question, and to-day there is anyhow a disposition to excuse the poet, painter or musician from censure for technical shortcomings. That, of course, is not our view but we are still prevented, until the law is reformed as promised, from indulgence in those whole-hearted (and wholesome) attacks upon the moral and spiritual deficiencies of our authors which lie at the root of their more egregious absurdities and transgressions. There can be little doubt that personal attacks ought to be permitted in this connection, for creative artistic work is something so potent for the general good, or ill, that those gifted to achieve it, or those pretending or hoping to fake it, should be exposed to the keenest blasts of censure, penetrating to regions which now are legally forbidden, with complete impunity. The loftier the mission the more unprotected should be the transgressor.

It cannot be denied that if men must have the governments they deserve, their poets will be no less appropriate to their deserts. Poets are not leaders so much as composite voices whose melody is conditioned by the general level of musical appreciation in human society. A recession in that general level does not leave any big fish stranded on the poetic beach; it will be strewn, as now, with an innumerable small-fry whose defeated egos will persuade them to the most incomprehensible antics in an effort to attract attention and to persuade the observer that they are bigger than they are. This would matter less if the result were not to confirm most of us in an approval of the prevailing ebb, and its flotsam, and in the superior value of being diverted to being elevated. The duty of the poet is, however, not to spin the vicious circle faster but to be steadfast in the unselfish practice of his gift even if a new tide drowns his feeble piping with a resurgent orchestra of the great.

It has been our constant practice in these notes to applaud such unselfish practitioners, and to ridicule those immensely more agile creatures who somehow contrive to use their spiritual flatness as an intellectual springboard. In our view an honest failure has more spiritual value than a spurious success, and when we are twitted with riding our quixotic nag to death we are unrepentant. Our steed is Pegasus and he will not die while any are found to feed him with provender, however poor, which was nevertheless grown somewhere near Parnassus.

One of the worst among the things we try to ride down is the literary "*poet*". The italics indicate our despair at the lack of an intermediate word between poet and pretender. For these literary persons are self-deceived, not consciously deceiving, as all men are liable to be by their own intellectual talent. There is much of this sort of work called poetry because it is in verse form, published nowadays, and the fact that for bread it offers a stone is not even recognised, so hardened have become our digestions. The plain fact is that much of this work is admirable in its power to interest the mind and to move our admiration by its skill; and if these were the function of the poet and the mission of poetry it would be grand. But it is not so. Poetry is an art which is achieved only when its touch upon our comprehension is emotional, when under its spell we cease to be anything but creatures whose spiritual perceptions usurp the whole mind. It goes

without saying that any literary virtuosity which compels our intellectual admiration for the author must obscure, will indeed entirely preclude, that sort of reaction in us. That can only be achieved by a simplicity which leaves us face to face, and alone, with those things of the spirit which are the poet's concern and also when they are clothed with a beauty of illustration, and of sound, whereby our senses are enlisted in the service of the soul.

Let us look at the war-time poems of Maurice Lindsay, *The Enemies of Love* (Maclellan, 6s.). Here is the literary "poet" at his synthetic best, offering a wealth of verbal riches and scarcely a single thrill to sweeten the labour. Mr. Lindsay seems to feel nothing. His hatred of scenes is quite inhuman for he can deal with human misery with a cold virtuosity which nevertheless, and quite obviously, tries to manufacture emotion mentally and with words. In a poem called "Heartsickness" he has achieved so much and yet so little that we will quote it in full. It is not one of the best things in the book from our particular viewpoint, and its claim to be poetry is non-existent, for we are dazzled not moved, and finish it with a sense of something missed by the misguided diligence of its writer.

"Cut crystal tears lie on the silk red rose
the air is electric with the eager scent of June;
the yellow-footed seagulls scream in tune,
the garden laughs in a lazy, elegant pose.

My heart leaps like a puppy in long hay,
its troubles tossed beyond the beach-turned sea;
my memory descants to a themeful bee,
all hate's accountants are on holiday.

Here, as the clustered apple-blossom drops
softly dissolving in petals over green corn,
the anxious hours of Summer wind a horn
to summon tress and urge the striving cops;

and beads of sadness balance on my brain.
I am the rose's flush of flaming red,
I am a seagull's song, and his arrowed tread,
I am the sleepy coolness after rain!

The rose lies weaker and resolves in rust,
the seagulls sink in search of further seas,
the Summer raindrops petrify and freeze,
my beams of love become black motes of dust.

The garden changes as I look upon it,
the poet stumbles as he tries to catch,
finds in his empty hands at every snatch
a handful of lust, or the bare bones of a sonnet."

With other poems Mr. Lindsay pleases us more, in particular with such things as "To a Polish Exile", in which his imaginative grasp of his subject seems to have moved him to a genuine compassion and he enlists our pity too, in consequence; but elsewhere his intellectual facility threatens to engulf him with insignificance. A piece on the "Death of a Very Important Person" begins,

"The faded General with the antler knees
watches the Spring's offensive run,
follows close on the heels of Summer,
with double whisky and double gun",

and continues more or less *da capo*. The reward of intellectual arrogance is emotional sterility.

What is the natural mode of expression to men? In our experience it differs but slightly from individual to individual in ordinary speech or writing and yet, when it comes to what is called, or miscalled, poetry, we are presented with an unlimited, and bewildering variety of communication as though we had entered another state of existence altogether. What, for instance, can one make of this, the first seven lines of a poem, "The Soldier", by Conrad Aiken (Nicholson and Watson, 4s. 6d.):

"More than a whisper, less than a sigh, perceptible
as breath in the mouth is silent and perceptible,
or the leaf on the dead stalk, rustling, rustling, to chatter
of time past and time to come: or the bird in the dusk,
iterating, iterating, his one phrase saying over
the all and the one, the all and the one, repeating
his knowledge of end and beginning."

Here is nothing spontaneous or genuine but either a deliberate piece of cerebration or a failure from incompetence to say what has to be said straightforwardly and with economy. Thus are reputations built nowadays in the world of poetry, and we are informed that Mr. Aiken has already achieved one in the United States. Our American Cousins may like their poetry carefully fabricated upon an ever-changing model, like their motor cars; and indeed they must if this sort of thing earns reputations over there. We should be glad to say that it could achieve none here but candour compels the admission that things being what they are we are not so sure. In any case we shall not be deterred from drawing a sharp distinction between poetry and this pseudo-literary pre-fabricated stuff and that without in the least decrying the talent of Mr. Aiken. All we say of him is that if this is a sample of his poetry then we would not wish to spend even a borrowed dollar on it. The remainder of this poem is very similar to its opening lines. It is, of course, prose decorated with poetic expressions, some imagery and an excellent descriptive power. The manner is a careful culture of an urgency in expression designed to suggest that some great thing is in process of birth. Nothing is, of course. It is just a literary trick which poets have no need of.

There is no such literary flavour about "The Seven Words" and "The Civilian", two poems by Adrian Head (Muller, 5s.), although there is plenty of literary skill. The difference is that here it does not obtrude and there is just sufficient of it for a proper presentation of the author's themes. How sufficient enough is! The result is two excellent poems in free verse, but not too free, wherefrom the author, with all his careerist dreams, if he have any, is absent, and we may read at peace the simple steady English which he offers us. How often it must be said that nothing is worth reading unless it is simple and easily comprehensible. That there is depth only in limpidity is perhaps not so accurate, but it is certainly true to say that only with clarity shall we be able to penetrate whatever depth there may be. These poems have faults, in particular there is a little too much imagery in places. Enough is always sufficient and too much illustration will fatigue before it can perform its function of emphasis. But there is imaginative power

and a deep sincerity in Mr. Head's work and here is a short extract, chosen at random, which serves to show the sort of book this is:

"as a child in the night
I have wandered through nightmare and gloom,
I have run and lost ground, I have turned,
I have shrieked with a cry that was dumb;
I have sought in my terror and closed my lost hands
On the nothings of empty despair."

That is an example of modern poetry which is as old as Homer, wherein all is subordinated to the sense, and we are made to feel by simplicity and sincerity the magic power of words, so used, to evoke in us those emotional moods in which alone we find perfect and satisfying comprehension; and find it moreover, not by any diligence of concentration but by an easy intuition which takes nothing from our contentment.

It is always an easy matter to convey a wrong impression, and never more so than when subjects like poetry are being discussed. A remark by one of our contributors in our last issue, may or may not have been addressed to this department, but we have so often held forth on the point raised that we should like to re-state our position for it does not seem to differ from that of our correspondent. The question asked is what part should thought play in the making of poetry, and a difficult question it is. For a very great man has gone on record with the statement that he knows of no mental process which could fairly be called the process of thought. For him, a thinker (so-called) of the front rank, there is no such process. His arguments and conclusions are always ready for him when he wants them, without labour or delay. He has experience and wide knowledge, of course, all of which he has digested, mainly unconsciously or, more properly, sub-consciously. That digestive process is always proceeding and its principal task is to adjust old conclusions to new facts and to correlate the whole mass of our mental wealth into a nourishing wisdom; but the unrealised fact about it is that so much of this alimentary process is automatic and involuntary, like most digestion, and it takes place without volition or conscious effort.

Everybody knows the stimulation of argument and the unwonted agility of the mind, and the tongue, under the spur of friendly discussion. We certainly do not stop to think at such times, nor feel the need to do so. Our answers and telling points rise like trout to the fly, to be hooked or to despoil, without a moment's hesitation. Thought of this sort is an instantaneous process, and no doubt, under the stimulus of inspiration plays as great a part in the making of poetry as of argument. The point is, of course, that one must not think a poem out with long cogitation and brain searching. That is how cerebral verse is made. There must be that special mood of sub-conscious awakening, with its gentle excitement, to provide a stimulus analogous but dissimilar to the spur of argument, under which our thoughts come spontaneously and with a brilliance that surprises even ourselves. That is not thought in the sense in which the word is commonly used, it is the negation of it.

There are plenty of examples of thought of the ordinary variety in modern verse and it is always apparent not only in the manner and matter but more cogently in the effect which it has upon the reader. We do not travel with it but remain aloof and suspicious, apt to carp and object, or perhaps admire, but we never lose the feeling that we are being addressed by a clever fellow who is out to impress us and we therefore resist, and even where we are compelled to admire it is without

the deep satisfaction which comes from the emotional but impersonal word of the poet.

There is, of course, that sort of cerebral verse which is written not out of personal vanity cum literary ability but probably from a basic misapprehension of the whole matter. This usually results in nothing worse than dullness since it lacks the more irritating note of pretension which sounds so piercingly in the former. There appears to be, in some minds, a belief that a prosodic form, perhaps adorned with rhyme, will add something worth-while to a literary effort, if only because of the demonstration of technical expertness involved. But this is not so. Prosodic forms do not really suit prose statements; and it has been left to this generation to believe they do. Such forms, indeed, can never be used calmly and coldly in a labour of composition with any hope of poetic success, and this opinion is confirmed by a perusal of "The Siren" by Harold K. Lloyd (Stockwell 2s.). Well enough as an exercise in versification it comes nowhere near poetry and because of its general flatness is laborious to read. Poetry is not a literary art, although it requires that art for its proper presentation.

A batch of new books from the Fortune Press offers some startling contrasts in both manner and quality. Beginning with "The North Ship" by Philip Larkin (Fortune Press 6s,) we find a rather unsimple simplicity which seems to lack any very cogent, or indeed coherent, message. We are afraid Mr. Larkin is a word-painter, not perhaps descriptively, but a sketcher of moods who is content to be vague and impressionist, rather in the modern manner but without its conscious brutality. In "Night Music" he begins with a charming simplicity but soon becomes involved with his own ideas of what makes a poem.

"At one the wind rose,
And with it the noise
Of the black poplars.

Long since had the living
By a thin twine
Been led into their dreams
Where lanterns shine
Under a still veil
Of falling streams;
Long since had the dead
Become untroubled
In the light soil.
There were no mouths
To drink of the wind,
Nor any eyes
To sharpen on the stars'
Wide heaven-holding,
Only the sound
Long sibilant-muscled trees
Were lifting up, the black poplars".

It maybe that Mr. Larkin was emotionally moved to write this and other similar things, but we doubt it. Fot all its fluency it has more the appearance of careful construction and consequently has no true relevance to the theme, so far as we are concerned.

Roger Lancelyn Green in "The Lost July" (Fortune Press 6s.) strikes a simpler, more sincere note but for all that falls a long way short of the real thing. His art however is innocent of those attempts to display s superior power of imagery and expression which deceive no one but their author. It is directed more to a beauty of expression in a normal manner in which there is nothing unexpected nor far-fetched.

"The rich sweet voices of mysterious bells
Are calling far away;
In the clear light the crumbling yellow stones
Melt into gold, while still the sweet sad tones
Murmur about them, till deep silence dwells
Beneath them with the day".

This is from a poem called "October in Oxford" and is a sufficient sample of Mr. Green's work. His attitude to poetry is, we believe, the right one, and when he can develop a deeper, less objective, vision he will be well equipped for much greater things.

Different again is "Expeditions" by J. B. Pick (Fortune Press 5s.). This is work of an uninhibited modern order, and like a giant, rejoicing in his freedom and his strength, the author writes,

"There is no joy upon this train.
The lavatory is out of order.
Do not spit. etc. etc."

So far as we pursued our investigation of this volume the above is a fair enough sample, neither more nor less poetic, if perhaps a bit coarser than the general run; and, of course, the indulgence in obscurity for its own sake is also in evidence; we are seldom disappointed of it in such company as the above.

"I left a neighbourhood of antics
bloated in a frozen morris;
knowledge, nothing, muddled together,
politics in every weather,
all concealed and I on tether,
maze of lobbies and departure
miaowing mummies, parlour tricks",

and so on until the hopeless end,—

"I slide like other
through a hole in ether,
may emerge exterior or back to This",

let us hope indeed it will not be back to this.

Charles Mason in "Dusty Days" (Fortune Press 5s.) makes amends. Here is again the proper attitude to the business with, however, more of that quality which we approved in Mr. Green, because there is more emotion and even tenderness, in his work. The poems are, as the title indicates, war-poems, in the sense that they were written in strange Middle-Eastern lands. Their inspiration was not war, but war's unrests, and love is urgent in many of them. Let us quote a verse or two of "Night Sky".

"Up through the leafless thorny tree
I see the struggle plainly,
Where in the dark inverted sea
Orion swims vainly.

He breasts the tide of time in vain
Borne sideways, bravely winking;
And yonder in the wheeling main
Red Mars is sinking.

For Mars shall drown, his terror past,
His hate, his rage, his thunder;
But Mars pulls down sweet youth at last
My youth goes under."

The last poem in this little book is an example of authentic spontaneous poetry, for all its note of music-hall comedy in the title "Kiss Me, Sergeant", and the unpretending crudity of its climax. It is by turns tender, passionate and frustrated and we make no apology for quoting it in full, strong meat as it is, for none is needed.

"KISS ME, SERGEANT"

"Kiss me, sergeant—Sergeant Sally—;
Work is over for to-day;
You've a pass, and we can dally
Kiss me, sergeant. That's the way!

Damn our military calling!
One unmilitary curl
From your khaki cap is falling
Are you sergeant now, or girl.

You who call decisively
Soldier girls to rise and shine?
Hark! They click derisively—
Bright brass buttons, yours on mine.

Let us hide where war can't find us.
Take your cap off, darling. There!
Fling away your cap and blind us;
Blind us, sergeant with your hair.

Buttons click and clink between us.
Press me tight; be fierce; be dumb.
Kiss; nor care who may have seen us;
Kiss until our lips are numb;

Kiss until we're breathless, gasping;
Crack your arms and strain your thighs;
Grip me like a wrestler clasping;
Passion's rising; let it rise.

Loud in loins that ache for spawning
Clamours our unborn for birth.
War denies its day a dawning;
Duty bans it from the earth.

War denies it life, so kill it,
Though it clamour to the stars.
Pour it out and waste it, spill it;
Make oblation here to Mars . . .

Lone you lie at night, and bawling
Sergeant-like you greet the day.
Back to camp, for Mars is calling;
Kiss me, sergeant, and away!"

An anthology edited by Geoffrey Moore and entitled *Poetry from Cambridge* (Fortune Press, 6s.) is a collection which, as one might expect, contains a good deal of clever verse, adorned with much literary skill, wherein little is handled simply but much is offered with a flourish as by expert jugglers. It is as though the waiter, bringing a chop to the hungry patron, should seek to divert him on the way with a conjuring exhibition, in which the chop is but dimly seen in a whirling flight of knives, forks and spoons and some of the more pungent condiments. It has not yet occurred to some of these gentlemen at Cambridge that the

chop is the thing and that the quicker we get it the sooner we shall be satisfied. Of course, if the chop is absent it might be as well to conceal the fact by some such divertissement so that the patron be persuaded to enjoy the less nourishing feast. And yet there is some work of another sort in this volume. It is the curse of modern anthologers that they seem constrained to give everyone a show, leaving it to the reader, so to speak, to sift the chop from the trick. It is quite certain, however, that nobody ever used such well-educated and well-turned language as many of Mr. Moore's contributors do to reveal his emotional depths, except perhaps the more refined and stilted heroes of the early Victorian novel whose love speeches still delight us. How one wishes that these modern poets could stammer a bit and lose at times and in a better cause their wonderful command of English.

A worse title than *Human and All Human*, by Broughton Gingell (Fortune Press, 5s.) it would be hard to conceive. No natural human being talks as he does either, except perhaps in distraught or feverish moments. The author, however, was probably quite calm and sane when he spoke his thoughts, out of a "Contemplation of Country Children", thus:

"This world is paved with children, chattering with song,
Or overturning spheres of thoughts and words, their heritage of earth
Weaving like threads within their minds, their aspirations leading ever on
Remoulded to the new desires and phantasies of life",

or in the following distantly significant morsel entitled "Labour Medallion":

"Heavy chested men and the iron earth
Cleaving with affliction
rock the torrid sun
with sinewed arms of brass,
sullen women with souring wineskins
swollen with birth and harshness wanton
drag stark-boned starveling children
and paniers of blackened bread
to iron chested men
on heavy cloven earth".

Oh, for a little more simplicity, it is so much more striking.

And sure enough in the next volume, *The Uncertain Margin*, by W. J. Harvey (Fortune Press, 6s.) we found it. What is this thing that we call simplicity but an attitude, a habit of mind. How often has it to be said that poetry is a product of the spirit, not of the intellect, and that the habit of mind necessary to the making of poetry is an introverted forgetfulness of itself and its indentification with the thing contemplated. Let us see how this works with Mr. Harvey in "Sea Death":

"Caressed by the washing of unseen tides,
lost beyond the cry of the lonely gull,
beyond the mobile water's whispering face
deaf to the wind-tongued, sea-swung bell,

stretched out against the black Atlantic sky,
by currents thrown, by ebb and flood
flung helplessly, he cannot know
the inward tidal movements of his blood,

who is but one with the cold earth,
his life with the world's life identified,

and stares in accusation at the stars
that will not tell him why he died."

Could anything be simpler or more limpidly clear? If it could, then it would have been even more moving in its emotional appeal. As it is it is a beautiful thing and in one sentence, if a long one, shows us a whole universe of human experience, evoking visions and thoughts which bring us the conviction of a thing almost perfectly said, a thing of poetry.

There is much else well worth reading in this *Uncertain Margin,* but what is said has no uncertainty but a sure touch and a wide range. If some of his poems go beyond the margin which separates us from modernism, as we term it, where the poetry is a matter of conception and imagery only, with a rhythm, for all its verse form indistinguishable from that of a good prose, we shall not complain. Mr. Harvey is never self-conscious in what he says, and contrives to make the forms or non-forms which he uses seem quite spontaneous and natural. And because he has not obtruded himself into his book we shall be charmed to meet him again.

Another inappropriate title we think is *A Romantic Miscellany,* by Derek Stanford and John Bayliss (Fortune Press, 6s.). The book is divided between its authors but in neither part did we discover anything which merited the adjective. In a preface the authors confess to some doubts as to its applicability and to a fear that they may be called romantic poets. We can calm that fear although to be called any sort of poet is surely enough in these intellectual times when our brains have begun even to threaten our continued existence, let alone our poetry.

Taking Mr. Bayliss first, we discover neither romance nor poetry but a synthetic modernism in which there is little but literary expertness, unmusical, and relying upon descriptive power for what effect it may have. It certainly has none upon the emotions, even in its presumably emotional pieces. That is due obviously to an objectively cerebral method which sets out, quite consciously, to conquer us, instead of trying to vanquish that equally resistant thing poetry.

Mr. Stanford's work is not very different for he too forgot to be dumb before he was emotionally inspired, or perhaps was unaware of the necessity. Literary gifts, and both authors have these in good measure, may not be used consciously in the making of a poem. They are only good when snatched up unthinkingly like a chisel by a sculptor whose soul is on fire with a sudden inspiration.

As an example of objectivity in verse, presented with excellent craftsmanship and high literary skill we can recommend the first volume of *The Collected Poetical Works of Donald Cowie* (Tantivy Press, 10s. 6d.). Reprinted from various periodicals and previous volumes, these poems have all the same general character, an appearance of verse for its own sake, competent with a fine literary art, but emotionally tepid at the best. To deny these poems interest would be unjust, for they are unselfconscious and terse in style; and a literary ability of this order is not to be despised; but our strongest impression of them is that they sprang from an industrious habit rather than from an emotional impulse and that, once more, an undoubted skill in verse making has been mistaken for a poetic gift. Mr. Cowie is moved, if moved at all, only by a need to express his thought in a musical idiom; and this is quite natural to him. But he seems to be satisfied with the superficial achievement and the avoidance of that over-emphatic use of words which, besides being bad art, is a sign of emotion sought, but not genuinely felt, by the writer. The result is an austerity which is essentially unsatisfying to those who read poetry to be emotionally stirred by something deeper than

admiration for prosodic skill or unflagging industry. One seeks in vain for that clear note of inspiration which tells of the author's subjective identification with the theme, and is offered only the polished cleverness of a man of letters, a substitute which would be more acceptable in a prosier dress. Mr. Cowie's lack of emotional force is never more apparent than in his sonnets, which is, of course, inevitable; and in this form a certain lack of technical achievement is noticeable also, as though occasionally the exigencies of a stricter prosody took command. Sonnets flow only upon a tide of feeling, they can seldom be composed.

If one wanted any preparation for a new volume, *Poems of Dedication*, by Stephen Spender (Faber, 6s.), an antithesis, such as the book just dealt with, would be excellent. Here is an entirely different approach and a softer, more profound note. Nothing in this book has been thought and not felt; feeling came flying with thought upon its wing; and if sometimes the message is a little blurred, the note a little tremulous or over delicate, there is nevertheless more of the true substance of poetry in his flicker than in Donald Cowie's stroke. If we make any adverse criticism it is that too many of these poems refuse to come down to earth, preferring to float dreamily somewhere between this humdrum planet and a problematic heaven. The result is a feebler impression upon the reader and a readier forgetting of the poems read. Mr. Spender's dreams cloud his utterance; the moment of clarity, that fork of lightning which parts the clouds, seems too often absent or rather to be subdued to a summer lightning which only illuminates them. So we remain largely unsatisfied by reason of this partial failure by the author to realise his own emotion for us. His poems are at time hardly more than those "poems" of music which seek to induce a mood in the listener, being denied any more definite role. But words are for clarity, diamond clear, and it is for the poet to realise his dreams for the vision of his reader, not merely to set him dreaming also. If that were the proper function of the poet obscurity would not matter, which may account for Mr. Spender's occasional indulgence in or toleration for it; but "The Trance" is one of his more firmly expressed pieces which yet exhibits the typical delicacy of his work:

"Sometimes, apart in sleep, by chance
You fall out of my arms, alone,
Into the chaos of your separate trance.
My eyes gaze through your forehead, through the bone,
And see where in your mind distress has torn
Its violent path, which on your lips is shown
And on your hands and in your dreams forlorn.

Restless, you turn to me, and press
Those timid words against my ear
Which thunder at my heart like stones.
'Mercy', you plead. Then 'Who can bless?'
You ask. 'I am pursued by Time', you moan.
I watch that precipice of fear
You tread, naked in naked distress.

To that deep care we are committed
Beneath the wildness of our flesh
And shuddering horror of our dream,
Where unmasked agony is permitted.

Our bodies, stripped of clothes that seem,
And our souls, stripped of beauty's mesh,
Meet our true selves, their charms outwitted.

This pure trance is the oracle
That speaks no language but the heart.
Our angel with our devil meets
In the atrocious night, nor do they part
But each forgives and greets,
And their mutual terrors heal
Within our love's deep miracle."

Walter de la Mare's new long poem, *The Traveller* (Faber, 7s. 6d.) with illustrations by John Piper escapes, of course, any such criticism of verbal obscurity or want of emotional force, and it continues and reinforces a reputation already firmly founded in our esteem. The light touch, with that sudden and frequent flash of inspiration which reveals profundity, and which is his particular claim upon us, is reproduced with the same effortless sureness which makes his poetry seem so simple a thing. Simple, of course, it is, but with that simplicity, unattainable by most, of the larger conception; the simplicity of mass and line from which the lesser architect recoils upon embellishment and excrescent details. In this poem words are used with a lack of complication which leaves us unconscious of them save for their music and their meaning, and we float easily down the stream of them to a sense of satisfaction and completion at the end. And yet what is the story and to what end does it lead? There is a sense of deepening mystery as the poem progresses, as though words were being used with an unflagging clarity to reveal ever profounder and more incomprehensible depths, and yet we are not defeated. There is too much that is evocative of thought, too much to elicit our intuitive responses, for the absence of a plain narrative meaning to matter. This is most certainly not a narrative poem; the traveller journeys in no material universe to encounter adventures by the way. He has them it is true but in the more mysterious realm of the spirit and there we must follow him as we may and in the degree of our own emotional receptivity. Mr. de la Mare did not write this poem with his brain and we shall not comprehend it with that organ. Its meaning lies beyond. The difficulty of quotation from a long, unchaptered poem of this sort is great. It is all in four line stanzas, with alternately rhyming pentameter lines, and it flows together so unbrokenly that to quote is to break in with no prospect of doing more than afford the faintest hint of the effect of the whole. Nevertheless we will try, and with the following stanzas we may hope perhaps to convey something of it:

"Soul and reality. Thus beauty may
Pierce through the mists that worldly commerce brings,
Imagination's blindness wash away,
And—bird at daybreak—lend the spirit wings.

Even the little ant, devoid of fear,
Prowling beneath the shadow of a man,
Conscious may be of occult puissance near,
Whose origin it neither recks, nor can.

So, though he too was now but vaguely aware
Whence welled this boon of benison and peace,

In awe of a mystery so divinely fair,
Tears gushed within him, not of grief but bliss.

Courage revived, like greenness after rain.
Slowly he turned; looked back. And in amaze—
A waif self-exiled from the world of men—
Trembled at sight of what now met his gaze:—

The hushed and visionary host of those
Who, like himself, had faced life's long duress,
Its pangs and horrors, anguish, hardship, woes,
Their one incentive ever on to press,

Defying dread and danger—and in vain:
Not to achieve a merely temporal goal,
Not for bright glory, praise, or greed of gain,
But in that secret craving of the soul

For what no name has; flower of hidden stem:—
The unreturned of kindless land and sea;
Venturers, voyagers, dreamers, seers—ay, them
The Angel of Failure hails with rhapsody."

The poem proceeds inexorably and with a mounting tension to its own mysterious climax and later occur these memorable verses which seem to sum up the futility of life in unforgettable words:

"It seemed his heart was broken; his whole life long
Concentrated in this moment of desire;
Its woe, its rapture, transient as the song
The Phoenix sings upon her funeral pyre.

'Alas', he gasped—his journey now at end;
Breathed softly out his last of many sighs;
Flung forth his hands, and motionless remained,
Drenched through with day; and darkness in his eyes . . ."

The poem ends as it should in an enigmatic rupture of communication. The line goes dead without warning and we are left with an echo in our hearts which seems to rise from depths beyond our full understanding; but this is a poem about life, and that we love with no real comprehension of its meaning.

"Sweet is that Earth, though sorrow and woe it have,
Though parched, at length, the milk within its breast;
And then the night-tide of the all-welcoming grave
For those who weary, and a respite crave:
Inn at the cross roads, and the traveller's rest . . ."

A volume of sonnets is always welcome in this formless world, and although *Late Harvest*, by Sir George Cockerill (Hutchinson, 6s.) is not entirely composed of them, there are more poems in this form than in any other between its covers, and they are all written with that simplicity which hides every sign of the author's finished craftsmanship. That is as it should be for the sonnet is a mannered thing which must aim at and achieve a high degree of perfection in the technical sense as a preliminary necessity; and that entails a complete absence of any sign

of effort either surmounted or compromised with. In Sir George Cockerill's sonnets there is that ease but, it must be confessed, they have little of that innate fire which is the sonnet's ultimate necessity, but their urbane style and elegance is well shown by the following example of his art:

"Goodnight, Sweetheart! Could any words be vainer?
Parted from you, could any night be good?
Were you my mistress, I your one retainer,
Keeping your wardrobe my proud livelihood,
I would fold up your things, put you to bed,
Hasten obedient to your least behest,
Make of my arms a pillow for your head
And of my heart a haven for your rest.
We would not say 'Goodnight, Sweetheart' until,
Each simple act of service purely done,
All my desires attend upon your will,
To find yours mine, in sweet surrender one.
And then 'Goodnight'—unless the sun give warning
That night must bid 'Goodmorrow' to the Morning!"

We are well content with such Elizabethan charm and, fire or not, there is much to be said for the tender warmth of things like this.

The Singing Vision, by William A. Younger (Hutchinson, 6s.) is quite another matter in blank and free verse, and some rhymed, which in seven chapters, so to speak, tells of man's spiritual journey towards completion through his integration with truth. Mr. Younger's book is an imaginative, philosophic examination of his own soul and possesses a maturity of emotion which gives every line a significance. One may say of these seven poems that one may quote at random from them and contrive to do them justice:

"In this place where even the grass was grown of stillness
I heard only the ascension of my prayer
drumming against the unknown. I waited there,
clear and quiet in this cup of emptiness:
Until, as water filling up a bowl
a voice flowed into the silence: and it spoke."

There is the ease of true competence in all these interlinked and related poems and an imaginative vision which never fails to record its experience with that authority which comes from the depth of the subconscious. Yet everywhere is preserved a limpid clarity which hides no beauty and denies the reader nothing of his complete satisfaction.

Marie Carmichael Stopes is a poet and we remember with gratitude her threnody for a young naval officer, Bill Rose. But on that occasion she had a theme near to her heart and that she moved us to no pale adumbration of her own grief was a tribute alike to the sincerity of her love for a drowned sailor and to the reality of her poetic power. But in *The Bathe, an Ecstasy* (Moring) she has done no more than recall for us her skill in the craftsmanship of poetry. Fine language, poetic imagery, skilful prosody, these are all there, but the work is unlit by any reflection of that passionate fire of which she is so capable. But this is a theme too humdrum, however enriched by imagination, for any proper conflagration of the spirit.

A first collection of published poems can be an exciting thing for the reader as

well as for the author, but we were not impressed by *December-Spring*, by Jocelyn Brooke (Bodley Head, 6s.). The poems here assembled are too cerebral, too literary, which is to say again, too uninspired by that emotional percipience from which poetry comes, and we were left, as so often, with no more than a craftsmanship to admire and some intelligent ideas to digest. Mr. Brooke is no musician with words, and verbal beauty whether of cadence or sound seem scarcely to interest him. As a botanist of repute it is surprising that he should be so seldom or so tamely lyrical but, after all, botany is a science and not a mere love of flowers. Here is an extract from one of his more botanical pieces called "Climate of War":

"After the barren season
And difficult birth
Of coltsfoot and the spathed cuckoo-pint
From frost-bound earth;

After the blackthorn winter
And double daffodils
(Like a child's crumpled and naive posies
On cottage window-sills);

After the sadness of woods
In lenten rain,
With the woe-waters flooding the sullen valley
And yellow leopard's-bane

Shining in the wet garden
The wind comes soft again,
And the sun breeds the pale and maculate orchis
In copse and beechen lane."

This is one of his less unlyrical poems and yet reminiscent of a botanical lecture in its painstaking communication of fact in language which would hardly be out of place in class. Mr. Brooke's poems are studied things with no unrehearsed fanfares and certainly no flights upon sudden wings.

A more normal voice, poetically speaking, than Mr. Brooke's is that of Geoffrey Johnson, whose new book, *The Mountain* (Williams & Norgate, 3s. 6d.) is next to hand. Here is more Parnassian fire but still too much literary fume. It is one of our human crosses that kindred talents should compete in the one person, and that a special ability to write verse of what we may call a distinguished character should persuade its possessor that more is not needed. In this age there is too much reliance upon the steady and controllable output of the mind and too great a reluctance to wait upon the unpredictable vagaries of emotional inspiration. The technique of introverted dreaming is so unpractical, indeed so impossible, in these times, that we are like to give up the struggle to learn it, and to fall into the common error of regarding any verse of sufficient literary quality as poetry. Which is not to assert that Mr. Johnson is no poet, but merely to say that he has included much intellectual and most competent verse whose interest is for the mind only and as such hardly memorable. There are, however, some poems of a different or shall we say, true quality, and one of them, appropriately called "Flame", demonstrates the poet in a manner denied to his merely clever work:

"In my hollowed hands I shield
A delicate flame of song;

Round it the winds of the world
And the great darknesses throng.

Round it the silver flares
Of worlds so far away,
Light travelling ere my birth
Will hardly reach me, grey.

Brief, brief, O very brief
Is the delicate flame I shield,
Spilling through pink lattices
Its gold on stone and field.

Bow down your face to it,
Bow down your lovely face.
Brief, it puts out the stars
And the terror of worlds for a space."

Something more alive in Mr. Johnson than his mind seems to be making itself heard in this short piece and it speaks in poetry.

How hard it is to confine within the rigid cage of a sonnet the delicate flame which it was invented to hold. In a book containing some seventy of them we were unable to discover many which had fanned the spark which was perhaps their genesis in the spirit of their author, but there were some, and if the famous Air Chief Marshal who writes the foreword was more moved than we by them that is doubtless due to his personal contact with those heroic young pilots whose unflinching self-sacrifice won the Battle of Britain. The book in question is *Men Like These*, by W. A. G. Kemp (Chapman & Hall, 6s.) and the sonnets are all good technically. But the technical achievement has to suffice in many of them and this is not surprising. To be emotionally moved to the point of inspiration on seventy occasions, and all upon R.A.F. experiences, is to ask too much of any poet in so short a while. But let us quote one, "Undying Wings", which does sustain its flame and which warmed us as we read it; and let us reflect how seldom a good sonnet is born:

"I think you fight for all such things as these
To keep them ever beautiful and free;
Raindrops that gem the English grass and trees,
The everlasting thunder of the sea,
Old walled gardens and summer birds awaking
On English countryside so sweetly sleeping,
White cliffs and yellow sands and sea-foam breaking
A village church its quiet beauty keeping,
The scent of April wall-flowers after rain;
You were not born to know the grave's duress;
Sure as the orchard blossom comes again
You live in this immortal loveliness;
When I look up into an English sky
There on undying wings I know you fly."

Here is a direct simplicity of utterance which for all its somewhat hackneyed expressions and its odd line, No. 9, yet exhibits a sincerity which can never be assumed nor counterfeited and which serenely overrides any carping on technical or any other grounds on its journey to our hearts.

"It is almost a frightening experience", says Mr. Richard Church in his preface to *The Invisible Sun*, by Margaret Willy (Chaterson, 3s. 6d.) "to recognise, shining through the cloud of meretricious verse, a true poet." For our part it is the meretricious verse which frightens us, with its substitution of intellect for character, of thought for emotion. Man must we suppose always be at war with his lower self, but in most human activities there is no such approval of the latter's triumph as there is in poetry. But let us return to *The Invisible Sun* and the large claim made for its author. With not too much emphasis we are prepared to agree, for Miss Willy's voice has that echo, indefinable and fleeting, with which emotion enriches human speech, and her technical mastery seems no more than the natural expression of her spirit. She does not seem to strive either to win our admiration or her own, but to launch her words upon the air with a spontaneous and eloquent beauty, which is uncaring that any industrious reporter should record them. It is, of course, the mark of the poet that the universal human spirit which he shares with all of us should be invisibly woven into the fabric of his work so that it is informed with a mysterious vitality, but that his individual ego should be conspicuous by its absence. Miss Willy's poems bear this mark but, and here we make a necessary qualification, she is at present singing in a more or less carefree manner, although there are signs of a growing awareness of the gulfs which yawn beneath us. Let us quote a verse of a poem called "Confession":

> "I sought God in dim churches, could not find him
> In soaring hymn, nor solitude or prayer;
> Through empty words I strove in vain to bind him
> Deep in my thirsting roots. Then, in despair,
> I turned away and spent my soul pursuing
> Perfection in fine thought and haunting phrase,
> And human love: by crowding life with doing,
> Disguised the formless drifting of my days . . .
> But songs stand mocked by mind's first wild conception;
> The virgin soul love's unity betrays."

If the word "spirit" were substituted for "mind" in the penultimate line of our quotation we could not agree more, but we doubt if there is, in fact, any difference in meaning between us. If Miss Willy can explore those deeper places with the same unconscious air with which she interprets for us the familiar beauties of our world, and the less fundamental enigmas of life, she will perhaps be no more of a poet but assuredly a more significant one and we shall await the presaged development with interest.

Australia would appear to excel the other dominions of the Commonwealth in its development of poetic expression and we have had occasion already to notice with favour a periodical called "Meanjin Papers". Now we have received a volume from the Meanjin Press, *The Moving Image*, by Judith Wright (6s. 6d.), and we are impressed although less by the author's fine literary and prosodic skill than by the fact that in spite of these qualities the note still remains, if not unstudied, pure. But there are some signs, in the artifice apparent in language and phrase, that Judith Wright is in some jeopardy from her own intellectual powers and there are poems in her book about which one is constrained to think that the emotions do not talk quite in that way. There is always this conflict between the intellect and the soul in creative work, a conflict which poses the

choice either of beguiling the reader for the moment or of moving him memorably. One may compose such things as "The Surfer" which begins:

"He thrust his joy against the weight of the sea;
climbed through, slid under those long banks of foam—
(hawthorn hedges in spring, thorns in the face stinging).
How his brown strength drove through the hollow and coil
of green—through weirs of water!"

and be content with the vigorously drawn picture, or summon the simpler responses of the heart for the much greater significance of "Northern River":

"When summer days grow harsh
my thoughts return to my river
fed by white mountain springs,
beloved of the shy bird, the bell-bird,
whose cry is like falling water.
O nighted with the green vine,
lit with the rock lilies,
the river speaks in the silence
and my heart will also be quiet."

Another Australian book is *The Dosser in Springtime*, by Douglas Stewart (Angus Robertson, 7s. 6d.) but of a very different quality. These poems are supposed, according to the dust cover, to show . . . the growth of Mr. Stewart's art, by which is meant, no doubt, the purely literary art of writing verse. For that is what this book contains—verse, clear-cut and vigorous but unlit by poetry despite some poetic imagery and adornment. Such things are beguiling for a moment but have no place in a review of this sort. But Mr. John Waller belongs therein even if his new book, *The Merry Ghosts* (Poetry London, 6s.) does nothing, in our view, to excuse the blurb that he has justly earned a reputation as one of the best poets of the war. The work is modern with all that subtle excess of irrelevance which stops short of incoherence but not of unreality, and which so often eschews, from a bloodless delicacy, every delight of rhythm which it so badly needs.

"On Friday we sailed from Durban, a friendly country
Of rickshaws and laughter, whose white buildings
Lean to the sun and are tall, a land of oranges,
Tomatoes and black servants, of decorous evenings."

To call such work consciously mannered is no more than its due, and if we are to consider it upon the plane of literature, it remains merely a matter of personal taste whether one likes or dislikes it. But our difficulty is that it is put out into a credulous world as poetry—an expression of truth revealed by the unerring emotional perception of man's spirit—and we must record our view that neither in inception nor in completion are the majority of these pieces worthy of that description. Inspiration has been too often subdued to a dreary formula where poignancy is lost in fog, and this is very plain in a short poem called "The Dead":

"In the days before we lost
the dear charm we had, which ever
Torments now with others' luck
And all the maze of the past,
Limbs could enjoy the usual day
Passing uneventfully by
In love and marvels, firm against
Brave and most optimistic sky.

Now pallid flesh can play no more,
Bright phantom not recall
These previous joys, but only grief
More painful than any wound
In knowing the luckless always wear
That memory young as a ghost
Of lively love on a still night
And all the sorrow of the world."

A richer, more sincere and simpler note is, however, within Mr. Waller's compass and we make him the necessary amends by quoting the inaptly named "The Second Best":

"Sleep, my darling, sleep, my love,
And in your lazy heart absolve
Me from all guilt of loving you
For that is my misfortune too.

I was most to blame, I own,
Because you were so different from
Past experience with others
Who were themselves the braver lovers.

And so I seemed too passionate
Which was to you so great a fault
That in excusing I concealed
The hurt that wrongs in you revealed.

Words will not force, nor tears—that way
Remains only for fools to try;
My loneliness in having lost
But makes of you the brighter ghost.

So where you cannot keep forgive,
Remember me with a half love;
While I who worship beyond praise
Yield in return your gay release."

Even in this Mr. Waller appears reluctant to sing full-throatedly but relapses into a self-conscious mumble in places as though to palliate and excuse his unwonted lyricism.

The Selected Poems of Ronald Bottrall (Poetry London, 4s. 6d.) come with a preface by Miss Edith Sitwell which does not hesitate in its expressions of approval. We will say at once that the work is impressive for its intellectual vigour and its language. With these weapons Mr. Bottrall seeks to subdue the reader and certainly attracts his attention, but fails to conquer for the sufficient reason that he attacks the wrong objective. There is a distinction to be made between austerity and sterility, between the deliberate chiselling of the too voluptuous expressions of emotion and the cold barrenness of intellectual conception—if conception can indeed be barren. This distinction is lost to Mr. Bottrall and our hearts must always be deaf to such eloquent cerebration as his. One short quotation ("To a Chinese Girl") from his book must suffice and we are not unfair in the selection. It is a typical example of an art which seems only too content to pursue its will-o-the-wisp unconscious of true light.

"Your grapnel eyes dredging my body through
Haul up the unchartered silt, efface
The mud flats of impeding residue.

Thus trenching you rive up my yesterday:
Exposed to sun, your eastern sun, not mine,
Compromise shrivels in Confucian rays.

Fitly proportioned pigments will combine
In deeper values, but vague ampersands
Choke the lacunae of our strict design."

This is not the whole of this poem but is a fair sample of what we regard as a misuse of words whose function, in any circumstances or role, is surely clarity, and yet more clarity, until they fade into their own limpidity.

There are so many poets of first-rate importance, if we are to judge by publishers' announcements, that criticism would seem to be a work of supererogation; but perhaps the exaggeration is pardonable when there are so many truths, especially in advertising; but first-rate or not Miss Kathleen Raine's new book, *Living in Time* (Poetry London, 6s.), contains more poetry than most. Consequently it was a little surprising to come across the following opening lines of a poem called "Annunciation":

"Day rings like a bell
Rising in me, rising
Salt and bitter as gall
The tears of life, the fountain—
Having life, I have all.
The white and trembling sky
Shattered into a rainbow,
Spilled in an upturned eye
Pours the erotic trance, etc., etc."

But this perhaps was a mere gesture to a well-known coterie or clique whose utterances are apt to be a little feverish, for Miss Raine has included poems of real beauty in this volume, beauty which owes its existence to an emotional perception which could never be content with anything but simple expression. Such a poem is "Ecce Homo," as also is a lovely sequence of four poems of Mary Magdalene, not to mention others where tenderness and delicacy compete for our response. But let us quote the first verse of "Ecce Home":

"Those eyes that opened on our earth at Bethlehem
Were all the world's young eyes; the eyes of birds,
Wild creature's eyes that know earth's secret places,
The bee's hexagonal vision of bright flowers,
And the first delicate flagellate touched by the sun
When hope first kindled sense to live and rise;
Our childhood's innocent eyes, all human eyes
That weep and wonder, watch, and suffer and surmise."

With this sort of thing we are in contact with a proper relationship between mind and spirit, between a literary gift and a capacity for emotional response (even to imagined stimuli) and the effect upon the reader is immediate and lasting. We salute Miss Raine as a poet in this kind of manifestation, foregoing without regret even the "bee's hexagonal vision" to find so bright a flower.

Pôle Star and Other Poems, by Mary Elizabeth Rhodes (Hutchinson, 6s.) is also hailed as being among the best new modern poetry. But what is the meaning of the phrase, new modern? Is it by any chance a euphemism for the antique, traditional or classical, and that the wheel has turned its full circle? For a perusal of this author's poems reveals none of that dark, verbal violence, that preoccupation with words for their own sake, which is the sign of our modern poet, but show a certain quiet sentimentality which is positively antiquated.

"Across my bare brown arm the grasses throw
Their spindly wind-blown shadows in the sun,
And overhead the little clean clouds go
Like white sheep, one by one."

This is new certainly in any modern company, but in other poems the author is not quite so new if more modern. For instance in "Return" (Oxford Revisited) she is apparently for the moment under a subversive influence, for she begins

"Spring falls from the towers, uncurls, uncoils there
To bud and bloom, leaf's green intricacy,
Where the sun's calyx falls apart, to bare
The yellow burning flower of the sky."

But in the main these poems are simple and, if not very evocative, have sincerity and a quiet superficial charm.

The House in the Forest, by Averil Morley (Oxford University Press, 6s.) is a much more ambitious thing; and the author is said to be a new voice in contemporary poetry. This is not, of course, a eulogy, since to be new is not necessarily to be an improvement, and Miss Morley's poems do not, to be candid, impress. We found nothing to excite that response in us which we expect from poetry; but many things which were competently composed, well thought out and expressed with a pleasant simplicity, but which, for all the pictures they presented to the mind, were unable to rouse our jaded souls from apathy. The title poem, the longest in the book, is a descriptive soliloquy, with poetic lines which would not be out of place in a good prose and is all too familiar in these times.

The Richmond Arts Club has published a book by T. M. Auld called *The Book of Thomas Rhymer* (5s.). This is a collection of verse which presents a consistently good technique but a rather unequal poetic quality; and Mr. Auld appears to be too content to make verses to concern himself overmuch with their depth or significance. It would seem from the title of his book that he is aware of this but we hope he will tire soon of what must be so easy for him and address himself to deeper and more difficult things. We will quote one of his own clever sonnets (?) ("Extrovert—Introvert") to point the moral and ask him to become that introvert (if he can) whose freedom he celebrates in his concluding verse.

"The Extrovert looks out and sees the show
Of nature and of man, eager to know
The why and wherefore of created things
To build earth's cities and equipped with wings
To fly above them. His home was the sea,
Is now the air, to-morrow it may be
The great uncharted waste between the stars
And he, the new Columbus, setting sail for Mars.

The Introvert, now dreaming by the fire
Or in a sun-drenched meadow, walks in Tyre,
Or Babylon, or in Byzantium.

No summer noon-day nor snug winter room
Can hold him captive; he was born to be
Free of no meaner city than Eternity."

Beat Drum Beat Heart, by Sheila Wingfield (Cresset, 7s. 6d.) is a single long poem in varying rhythm, sometimes rhymed and sometimes not, of some 2,000 lines, which deals with the effect of love and war upon human life. The poem offers some evidence of haste, or perhaps of inadequate prosodic competence, and much of it is purely prose. There is also too much of that colloquial abbreviation, common to our daily speech, but quite out of place in a poem.

Another from Cresset Press is *The Double Image*, by Denise Levertoff (5s.), the prevailing note of which is modern with the usual neglect of prosodic rhythms:

"What can I give you. I am the unseizable
indigo and wandering sea. I give
no love but music, cold and terrible airs
to darken on your heart as albatross
obscures the gleaming water with a wing."

But perhaps the formless will lose its charm for Miss Levertoff and she will become "new modern" too. If so we may expect more ballads like the following from her, and they will be welcome if only for the nice economy of language which says so much, with so little, and so well:

"Bravely in a land of dust
we set out, as pilgrims must,
you, who fear the dark, and I
fearing winter in the sky.

Dark and cold the winter cloud
hung above the hill of lies
and my phoenix cried aloud,
took flight toward the eastern skies.

Do you think I shall forget
the tried intent, the diamond set
solitary and forlorn
in a coronet of thorn?

Beyond the high and frozen hill
beyond the forest black and still
I shall find you, where the fire
burns the wings of my desire."

With No Changed Voice, indeed, John Irvine speaks in his new book of that title (Mullan & Talbot Press, 3s. 6d.). There is no decline in his eloquence nor in the perfection of his craftsmanship and there is enough music in his poems to carry us happily along without caring whither or why. But on a soberer and more deliberate view it must be asserted that we are not borne very far nor very deep, and we fear that in this more important respect also Mr. Irvine's voice is unchanged.

If we quote Book 1, Canto 1, Verse 1 of *The Tall Interpreter*, by Maurice Carpenter (Meridian Books, 2s. 6d.) we shall perhaps need no further light upon the nature of this single long poem:

"The Tall Interpreter stood by her side

Smiling uncertainly; trouble in the street
Unnerved him: the slim and distant bride
Shook in her pale gold shell, waiting
The hand of Orpheus, at the iron gate
Tall, so solicitous, her guardian withered
Visibly, knowing the turn of fate,
Wringing his fingers, his long skeleton writhing
In fear and anticipation of her strange revival."

It is not within the compass of the space at our disposal to deal adequately with what the epilogue suggests is only the first book of a probable five, the first alone running into some twelve or thirteen hundred lines; but book one is at times a striking performance although not always easy to understand. Indeed the author confesses to the occasional use of words which, as he puts it, have lost their hold upon the rope of meaning. He is in search of what he describes as "new riches of verbal texture" by this absurd means but will land his readers, we believe, in mere fog and obscurity by its practice. What may be the value of this poem time only can show. If people will read it, disregarding the effort, it may, as its author hopes, enrich the language and restore poetry to its proper place in life. But these are ambitious hopes.

Another Meridian Book, *The Years of Anger*, by Randall Swingler (2s. 6d.) is a more usual production, a collection of poems, some impudently modern in tone and texture, others more acceptable to the cultivated ear. There is, however, nothing of any great importance among them. The best of them, we think are those whose themes are drawn from Nature; and Mr. Swingler reveals, sometimes, a definite clear-cut quality of his own in his handling of them. In "Acres of Power" he begins

"Acres of power within me lie,
Charted fields of wheat and rye.
And behind them, charted too,
Brooding woods of beech and yew.
Beyond them stretch, uncharted yet,
Marsh and mountains, dark and wet,
Whence sometimes in my dreams and ease
Strange birds appear among the trees."

This is, of course, quiet enough, philosophic too in later verses, but it has simplicity of a sort and a genuine ring which is too often lacking elsewhere.

Success as a novelist tends to obscure achievement as a poet. This is a remark made on the dust cover of Temple Lane's new book *Curlews* (Talbot Press, 2s. 6d.). We should suppose rather that the two things were incompatible, generally at all events, and the contents of this book reinforce the view to some extent for it contains rather too much verse of that order which appears not even to aspire to poetry. There are exceptions, however, and the title poem is one of them. Speaking of curlews the author has this beautiful thing to say:

"And now they sound the whole world's quest
And now the whole world's grief;
And then, for nights, they break no rest
And trouble no belief."

In other more serious poems there are signs of that too literary treatment which might be expected of anyone whose main endeavour is to write novels.

Translated Eastern Poems

AS Mr. W. G. Archer points our in an Introduction to *Folk Songs of Chhattisgarh*, by Verrier Elwin (Oxford University Press, Rs. 15), "In the development of English poetry, translation has always played a significant and, at times, a major part", and he quotes a number of cases where poets have enriched their imagination and extended their style by the translation of foreign masterpieces. He then quotes Stephen Spender as saying "for a poet, translating foreign poetry is the best possible exercise in interpretation". So far so good. Then he further quotes Stephen Spender as saying that "a poet's aim as a translator should not be absolute accuracy, but to return to the source of the poet's inspiration and to create a parallel poem in the English language".

I entirely agree, but few there be that do it. They may in prose or a hybrid verse-prose form, produce the English equivalent of the foreign poem, thus enabling the English reader to learn of (a) the range of subject of that poet's or that country's poems, of (b) its mode of treatment as to mood, length, usual form and the like, and of (c) its range of symbol, and even of (d) something of the life and viewpoint of the people. All this, however, concerns the student of mythology or sociology, not forgetting the student of comparative literature, but does it concern the poet? Unless the English form is a poem which, viewed as such and without the knowledge of its foreign source, may be fairly regarded as a poem, it is not of the realm of poetry.

This is a severe test, but in my view the true one, and few there be that pass it. Most translations of foreign poems published as such are not even passable verse, much less good poetry. The quatrains of Omar Khayam, on the other hand, are excellent poems, but bear, so I understand, but little resemblance to the original. Only Powys Mathers, in his version of the *Arabian Nights* and other works, comes to my mind as producing translations of poems which are agreed to be reasonably good translations and are certainly lovely poems.

Now Mr. Elwin's book is described as Folk Songs of Middle India, and the contents of a song may be translated into verse without attempting to rise to the level of poetry. Those, therefore, who care to look through the 450 pages of his most erudite, and one would think, complete work on the subject, will find hundreds of songs thus paraphrased. But in the absence of a tune for the song and a true poem for the words, these renderings are hardly in the realm of poetry with which alone, though in the broadest sense, The Poetry Society and THE POETRY REVIEW are concerned.

But a volume of *Chinese Poems* translated by Arthur Waley (George Allen & Unwin, 8s. 6d.) supported, as he is, by an army of admirers, raises the problem in its most uncompromising form. Can an English poet translate a Chinese poem, or, for that matter, any poem? Can, indeed, any poem be translated at all? A poem is conceived in the mind of a poet as a whole, an integral part of it being the language in which it is conceived. How, then, can a foreigner translate this work of art, complete in itself, into another medium? Could an English poet translate an ode of Keats into, say, a modern idiom, though using the same vocabulary, and if so, would the result be a translation of Keat's poem? If not, how can Mr. Waley's English verse be a poetic equivalent to the Chinese original? I in no way belittle his scholarship, nor his love of the Chinese people and things Chinese, nor his power of setting before us in the English language much of the dignity, serenity and beauty of the Chinese mind. But I do complain of his title *Chinese Poems*, although the sub-title and description is rightly "Translated by

Arthur Waley". For these are not Chinese poems, but free verse English equivalents of the meaning of the Chinese poems. As such they do not, I respectfully submit, earn the right of inclusion in the field of English poetry.

For those, however, who care not how Mr. Waley describes the result of his delicate art this volume contains nearly all of his translations of Chinese poetry. Some of them, revised with new annotations, were taken from his previous works. There are also a handful of new poems which the connoisseur may take a delight in finding. But with all respect to this great interpreter of Chinese poetry, to our English ears this is a book about Chinese poetry and not of Chinese poems.

Having pointed out that THE POETRY REVIEW is only concerned with poetry, it is difficult to justify a review, however brief, of *Chinese Short Stories* (Transatlantic Arts Co., 7s. 6d.), edited and translated by Yuan Chia-Hua and Robert Payne. In the Introduction we are given a valuable essay on modern Chinese literature but, as the authors admit, the modern trend is yet but half developed, and the impression is rather of tentative sketches for a full picture not yet painted. Again, the problem of translation arises, though in a less acute form, and it may be that the slight air of vagueness in handling the difficult art of the short story is inevitable in the course of translation, if not inherent in the inexperience of the Chinese author. It is difficult to choose among eleven stories, nearly all of which are by a different author, but "The Waves of the Wind", by Lu Hsun, "the father of modern Chinese literature", may be a masterpiece in the original.

CHRISTMAS HUMPHREYS.

Translations of Poetry, page 298 of the August-September 1946 *Poetry Review,* brings timely advice to those who would venture into the field of poetry tran lation.

As an instance nearer home than Russian or Czech Poetry, I have in mind "The French Muse", by Wilfrid Thorley (published by Frederick Muller Ltd.). Mr. Thorley takes fifty examples as a cross-section of French poetry from the 15th to the 19th century: arranging the work in chronological order and setting original and translation side by side, inviting line for line comparison. He brings to his purpose a fine equipment and serenity. The early and later periods make exciting comparison and enthralling reading. The lovely "Ere thy soft ray be lost . . ." from Verlaine; the tender feeling and inspired wording in Gabriel Vicaire's "Poor Liza"; and the sardonic couplets of the neighbouring poem, "The Beggar's Look" (Jean Richepin).

Mr. Thorley does not, I think, fare so well in the middle period. Mallarmé's sultry "L'Après-midi d'un Faune" receives a cold douche in the English version and Leconte de Lisle has his roots too firmly entrenched in the exotic to be challenged in "The Black Panther".

That Mr. Thorley has put his own gifts to the service of translation should be proof enough of the value of such work and should be a stimulus rather than a deterrent to newcomers. But the deeps must be sounded in the quest.

London, N.W.3. PHILIP EATON.

THE POETRY REVIEW has brought me much pleasure while in the Army, and I look forward to forthcoming publications with interest. I am fortunate in being able to receive the B.B.C.'s Third Programme exceptionally well and find the short verse programmes excellent both in content and delivery. We must surely welcome this venture with enthusiasm and see to it that poetry plays an increasing part in its life.—M. ALLISTON, Dudley.

From Villon to W. J. Turner

THE vagabond king of French poets has secured a long posthumous fame which, despite his habit of composing lyrical testaments, he could never have imagined. A new and handsome edition of *The Poems of Francois Villon*, translated by Dr. H. B. McCaskie, with delightful illustrations by Edward Ardizzone (Cresset Press, 21s.) gives to English readers all the verse of the immortal rogue with the exception of the seven untranslatable poems in the argot of the Coquillards, the fraternity of thieves in which he enrolled. Dr. McCaskie has no illusions about Villon; he sees him as a cynical gamester with life, standing "at the bar of moral judgment a convicted homicide, burglar, pimp and thief, and we can offer nothing in defence or mitigation, except that it all began with an unlucky accident". The earthy subject matter of his poems—the poems of a man on the run, for the most part—is responsible for the enormous legend that has come down the centuries; for here was a poet who accented the fleshpots, who tweaked the nose of authority and snatched at the robes of dignity. Women, wine and food, whether in short supply or full, these were his themes, and his preoccupation with them accounts for more of his popularity than does his genius. Of the authenticity of that genius there can be no two opinions. In an age when poetry was a polite occupation of the courts he made it a living thing, a vehicle for conveying satire and unflinching observation of the life of his time. He was hardly ever serious; he flamed bitterly and jestingly through the span of his short inglorious life; but he held up a mirror to the Paris of the middle-fifteenth century for which the world is eternally in his debt. Dr. McCaskie's translations are scholarly and sound; they may not have the lilt and fire of the freer versions of Swinburne and others who have been moved to imitation by admiration, but they do give us—with the French text opposite for comparison—a real insight into the mind and idiom of Villon. We can be grateful to the translator for a feat of a remarkable consistency, and to the artist and the publishers for illustrations beautifully conceived and reproduced.

The subject matter of a later French poet, Charles Baudelaire, was not far different from Villon's. He too celebrated women and wine with a sick disgust of a soul that had lost itself in the jungle of life. But whereas Villon was a scarifier of surfaces, Baudelaire plumbed deeper, and with an infinitely more self-conscious artistry. Mr. Michael Hamburger, who won recognition by his versions of Holderlin's poems, has rendered into English *Twenty Prose Poems of Baudelaire* (Poetry London, 5s.). They have fidelity to the queer intensity of the master's originals, but somehow they contrive to have an outmoded air—the fault, of course, of Baudelaire. For these are period pieces of literature, to which we have so often been referred by Arthur Symons and others. They have somehow the taste of a very old wine which, uncorked, has not come up to expectations. With the world as it is, with the soul of man as it so woefully is, we may well find it difficult to put ourselves in the mood of the author of the Prose Poems:

> "One should always be drunk. That is all; that is the unique question. In order not to feel Time's horrible burden that breaks your shoulders and bows you down, you must get drunk without ceasing.
>
> But what with? With wine, with poetry, or with virtue, as you choose. But get drunk."

It is the poetry (the prose poetry) of a doped spirit in retreat from experience. It has a sadly tarnished air.

A Latin poet again, and this time presented in a book of critical appreciation with an excellent biographical section. *Garcia Lorca*, by Edwin Honig (Poetry

London, 7s. 6d.) meets the definite need of the increasing interest manifested in the work of the young Spanish poet who was martyred by the Franco rebels in 1936. He lived 37 years only, but he crowded an immense volume of poetic and dramatic achievement into his brief maturity. From his boyhood in Granada, Lorca's energy and instinctive artistry found ever-increasing expression. He was a natural poet, an improviser whose poems often came to him verbally in short crisp metres that quickly gave them a popular currency. They have the essentials of popularity, fire and colour and audacity, and they are compacted of images of earth and sensual humanity. Imagism, indeed, is a conspicuous device of Lorca's work. A typical example is "August":

"(August,
counterpoints
of sugar and peach,
and the sun within the afternoon
like a fruit's core.
The ear of grain keeps intact
its hard yellow laughter.
August.
Children eat
brown bread and delicious moon.)"

It may remind us, perhaps, of our own early Aldington, Pound and Eliot and a poetic mode long discarded, but it does convey the heat and luxury of a Spanish summer and it is strongly indicative of a colourful element in all Lorca's work. He found it in surrealism, in folk-dramas, in extensions of his personal consciousness into the realms of the fantastic and bizarre: always colour, with strong strains of typically Spanish violence and cruelty. Like many poets, Lorca aspired to drama, but from the descriptions and quotations furnished by Mr. Honig he seems never to have fully realised himself in the dramatic medium. His approach to folk-drama by the way of surrealism is strident and strained to an Anglo-Saxon mind. He has been compared with Synge, but with little justification. He juggles with symbols of violence and frustration, where the Irishman builds from the living stuff of humanity and with a natural genius for dramatic form. The Republic gave Lorca a chance in drama which he seized in an ecstasy of experimentation, but first and last he was an instinctive lyrist—as much an acquired taste to English minds as a pomegranate is to our palates, but undeniably interesting, and Mr. Honig is to be warmly thanked for his painstaking and sympathetic analysis. It is curious, by the way, to find a Spanish echo of Yeats's famous image, "The years like great black oxen tread us down". Lorca writes:

"and the prehistoric bulls of Guisando,
made half of death, half of stone,
bellowed like two centuries
tired of treading the earth."

Honours again to the Irishman!

"I am a Bookman, if ever there was one", wrote the late Sir Edmund Gosse in one of his letters; and a similar claim could as emphatically be made by Mr. Holbrook Jackson. *The Reading of Books* (Faber & Faber, 15s.) is one of the highlights of the winter's publishing. Mr. Jackson must have been very busy in recent years, for it is only a few weeks since his delicious anthology *Bookman's Holiday* started on its successful career. The new book is himself plus some hundreds of others, a work of shrewd and urbane scholarship and instruction derived from a

wealth of miscellaneous reading of a most impressive range. Mr. Jackson reverses positions: in the past the accent has been upon the writer, the reader has been the hodman who pays his money and cheerfully occupies the humble position assigned him by fate. But our author would alter all that. He wants the reader to take on a new role of an assured dignity, to approach books as an artist and treat them as the media of an art—the art of reading. And he wants him to use books in his quest of that larger all-embracing art, the art of living. He is not to read books because he must, because they have been chosen for him as established masterpieces; he is to find them in a never-ending quest, for which he will always be equipping himself, in "the quality of his mind and the quality and extent of his reading", in the "alertness of the senses, the mind, and the imagination". He will always be tasting, judging, assessing, and like all true artists he will never be satisfied, for the world of books is illimitable. He will become an athlete of the mind because he will be constantly exercising his faculties. In his 300 closely-reasoned pages Mr. Jackson demonstrates the sort of reader he himself is, but is content to leave his readers to learn the art for themselves.

The Canadian scholar and critic, Mr. George H. Ford is, necessarily, not so content, for his book, *Keats and the Victorians* (Oxford University Press, 20s.), is a work of research and instruction addressed to a particular audience, the innumerable lovers of the poetry of John Keats. The book is an attempt to trace the influence of the poet's poet and his rise to fame during the period 1821-1895. Mr. Ford shows how much Tennyson owed to Keats and to his emphasis on beauty, how the later poet followed Keats's example in his choice of mediaeval and mythological themes; and, as a rewarding compensation, how much Keats's own fame owes to the critical comparisons instituted between him and the idol of the Victorians. Mr. Ford then goes on to examine Matthew Arnold's judgments on Keats, how he brought the attitude of the missionary to his estimate, the blind spot he had for "Hyperion" even, but (again an instance of a rewarding compensation) reminds us how "The Scholar Gipsy" derives its stanza form from Keats and some of its loveliest images from the "Ode to Autumn". But it was when Dante Gabriel Rossetti's poems appeared that Keats's influence was to be seen in a marvellous blend of the original and the derivative, in a permeation of one great poet's genius by another's. In fact, as Mr. Ford strikingly shows, Keats's influence developed and extended throughout the second half of the 19th Century, and is to be found reflected in the work of William Morris, Swinburne, Meredith and Wilde, as in the poetry of hundreds of lesser men. As Mr. Ford says on the final page of his valuable book, "If a Keats had not existed, the Victorians would have had to invent one".

From Keats to Shelley is not a far step. In *Shelley: a Prelude* (H. G. Commin, Bournemouth, 12s. 6d.) Mr. R. Martin-Baynat reveals an admiration not far short of idolatry, though the little book is mainly a compendium of extracts from other authors, from Trelawny to André Gide. Its dominant purpose seems to be to claim recognition of Shelley as the supreme Thinker of our age, as the Prophet of Free Men. The author draws attention to Shelley's enormously greater output of prose than poetry (a proportion of four to one), by which he established himself as a philosopher of the future, teaching us freedom through individuality conscious of moral responsibility, to the State, to mankind and to the Universe. Mr. Martin-Baynat does well to re-emphasize the value of Shelley's general contribution to modern philosophy, and it can be seen—even allowing for the world's sad state to-day—how much of his onetime revolutionary thinking has

been applied and systematised. He claimed for poets that they were "the legislators of the world" and in his case the claim has been proved valid. But Shelley primarily is a poet, whose "great and final achievement", as Mr. Edmund Blunden says, "is that he creates whatever he strives for with a personal originality, and none of our poets could say with greater truthfulness than Shelley, 'This is my book'."

Mention may be made here of the young Shelley's translation of Euripides' *The Cyclops*, which is reprinted with Dean Milman's translation of *The Bacchanals* in a new series (The Blue Book Co., S. Croydon, 2s.). Both renderings must seem flat and undistinguished to a generation having access to Sir Gilbert Murray's highly individual translations of Euripides.

In preparing his simplified and truncated edition of Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales* (John Murray, 6s.) for the Ordinary Man, Mr. H. L. Hitchins seems to have been fully aware of the objections likely to be raised by lovers of Chaucer and students of Middle English. To the first class he cheerfully says, "put this book down" and to the others he says, "take it with the tongs and put it on the back of the fire out of harm's way!" It will be seen then that his approach is disarming. We can't expose ourselves to the charge of literary snobbery by denying to the Ordinary Man—already so well catered for—any titbit or morsel, even though it be pre-masticated. It *may* induce him to approach the solid and salty meat of the original un-Hitchinised version, and that chance is worth something. In an age of digested classics why not peptonise Chaucer? As in the case of certain educational experiments we shall have to wait for the results, or never know them. We may hope that the Ordinary Man's appetite has been whetted by the omission of the final "e" and the substitution of "descriptive notes only" for the more robustious Tales, but we can't be sure that any useful converts to Chaucer can be obtained by these methods. An English classic is worth an Englishman's study or may just as well be let alone. But, having said that, it is only fair to recognize that within the scope of his intention Mr. Hitchins has done a workmanlike job, albeit "after the school of Stratford-atte-Bowdler".

A sad fragrance of mortality attaches to two posthumous collections, Mary Webb's *Fifty-One Poems* (Cape, 5s.) and the late W. J. Turner's *Fossils of a Future Time* (Oxford University Press, 8s. 6d.). It had been thought that Mary Webb's poetry had all been published in the 1928 volume, but the contents of the present book were found laid away among her late husband's papers and it is certain that admirers of her delicate talent will be glad to have them. These poems breathe her gentleness of spirit, her reticence and careful artistry. They are never great, but they have the permeating quality of lavender, as in "Reflections":

> "No beauty is mine, and yet I saw to-day
> A lovely face within my mirror glassed;
> For you had looked upon me as you passed,
> And still there lingered, as you went away,
> Reflections of your grace in mouth and eye—
> Like those rare dawns that paint the eastern sky
> And mirror forth
> Their beauty even in the hueless north."

There was a quiet spontaneity in Mary Webb's unassuming verses which—for all their greater accomplishment—is strangely lacking in W. J. Turner's last poems, passed by him for press just before his death last December. His early work of the Georgian period, so often anthologised, had in it a lilt and a heart-catching quality, but many of these poems have the air of being self-conscious

exercises, with no compulsion of song upon them. They give us the feeling that he was bewildered by the complex tendencies of contemporary poetry and was seeking to adjust himself and get into line—with Eliot and the post-Eliotists, with the Atom, and the statement-makers of the brave new world. Constantly in these poems he seems to be seeking profundity of utterance, with mannered echoes of other minds, but at his best he compasses the old enchantment, as in this stanza from "Sea Music":

"Are there sounds in the sea
Fifty fathoms deep?
No, there is not a sigh
There, but like sheep
Valley-wandering on the mountain-side
Soft as the wool of sheep collide
Sister-sounding streams
In dumb clash of dreams."

The little collection of poems by Mr. Stephen Gwynn, *Aftermath* (Dundalgan Press, Dundalk, 3s. 6d.) has the genial note of all Mr. Gwynn's writings. He can be strongly nationalistic, as in "To Ireland", and playful, as in "The Lesser Celandine", where, as a practical gardener, he calls Wordsworth's enthusiasm in question: "No! William might observe and moralise
And praise the buds and seem to understand;
But when I read his 'Celandine', I ask,
Did William ever take a spade in hand?"

We may conclude our survey of this miscellaneous batch of new publications with a strong note of welcome for two excellent anthologies. *The Personal Note*, compiled by H. J. C. Grierson and Sandys Wason (Chatto & Windus, 7s. 6d.) is a book that fulfils a real need, for how often have we wanted to refer to an author's feelings about his ideas, his methods and his means. Of course they are in the separate books, or in the "Lives" or the "Letters", but they are not always there when we want them, when we feel like investigating the processes of literary creation; and now here they are (sufficient of them for a writer's bed-book, anyway) and we are grateful for the happy thought that brought them together. Here's Chaucer, Spenser, Donne, Dryden, Boswell and Shelley, George Eliot, Trollope, Matthew Arnold, and from our century Hardy and Yeats; with many others, opening their creative minds, discussing their literary principles and intentions. And to give special value to the whole scheme, the long "Introduction on Introductions" from Sir Herbert Grierson himself, reminding us that in a preface "we have the interest of a complex reaction to the writer's own feelings, his awareness of his audience, and his subject".

If *The Personal Note* is a book for bookmen *The Quiet Spirit*, compiled by Frank Eyre (Oxford University Press, 8s. 6d.) is very opportunely an anthology for Everyman, for it comes after years of dreadful strain and stress when calm and quietness are as desired as pools in the desert. It is arranged on the principle of one of those programmes of soft music where item flows smoothly into item and the credits are given at the end. So here; in five related groups the anthologist has made his choice and prints the poems or extracts to be read consecutively. but reserving the titles and authors to end sections. We found the method a little teasing and turned often to the index; but that is a matter of self-discipline. And of course we asked ourself why such and such a poem was included and another was not; but, by and large, we were satisfied.

WILLIAM KEAN SEYMOUR.

Our Own Anthology

A NEW PROPOSAL AND APPEAL

As indicated in this Review for January, 1947 (pp. 11–12) the Council of the Poetry Society have decided to adopt the recent Desert Island plebiscite as the basis of a popular collection of poems which readers themselves would like to have available in printed form. For those who preserve their Poetry Review, the original Desert Island appeal will be found on page 195 of July, 1945, and the resulting analysis at page 355 of November, 1945.

In Desert Island Poems, the lists were confined to 30 poems, post-1800, and not exceeding 150 lines. No extracts were allowed unless as a complete poem in a longer poem, *e.g.*, "Tears, idle tears," from Tennyson's "Princess".

We now want your favourite *one hundred poems* in English, *of any period,* not more than 200 lines in length. The same rule applies about extracts.

The favourite one hundred poems, as proved by the analysis sent in, will be published by The Poetry Society as its own Pocket Anthology. As such, it will be the first anthology chosen by the purchasers as distinct from selections chosen by some editor and author for public approval.

The value of this original experiment depends on the quantity of lists sent in, and the care taken in compiling them, and we should like at least 250 selections from which to compare the winning anthology. Please, therefore, set to work at once and send your lists to me, c o The Poetry Society, 33, Portman Square, London, W.1, as soon as possible.

Do not trouble to enclose a stamped and addressed envelope, as all the lists will be retained. To save a great deal of my time as Anthology Editor, please make your lists (typed for preference) in the following way :—

On the *left* side in *alphabetical* order, put the *poets ;* on the *right,* in any order you like, the *poems,* and in the case of items by other than standard poets, the source. A courageous personal selection is desired, which may include generally unfamiliar poems and the newspaper cuttings which go to make up one's own private pocket book anthology.

This will materially assist the work of analysis. Please, then, study the rules, and get busy on Our Own Anthology. Christmas Humphreys.

In renewing my subscription for the twelfth time I must add my small quota of appreciation for your services to poetry. As a descendant of William Habington, the sixteenth-century minor poet, it is only natural that there should be a strain of poetry in my make-up, and each copy of the Review is received with intense pleasure and read from cover to cover. Never before was the cleansing and healing art of poetry needed so badly as in the present chaotic age. The fact that it is still flourishing and even gaining fresh devotees, gives hope of a saner age to come.—Wm. Abington, Rushden.

Dynamics of American Poetry : CXVI

Robert E. Tristram Coffin grew up on a Maine salt water farm and went to a rural, red-brick schoolhouse—so did my father, but it happened to be in Bennington, Vt. Mr. Coffin followed his red-brick schoolhouse to Princeton, and then to Oxford, where he was a Rhodes Scholar, just before and after his two years in World War I.

Speaking of Vermont, we find Mr. Coffin writing in his new volume, *People Behave Like Ballads* (Macmillan Co.)

The young new preacher had an edge
Like a well-whet knife,
His eyes were full of stars as he
Spoke of eternal life.

He liked this little town in white,
The steady, sober people,
He loved this church that might be his
With mountains by its steeple.

He gave his listeners all he had,
Voice and brain and heart,
His sermon warmed him so he felt
The teardrops burn and smart.

He finished, and the hush was deep
In the little place.
A gray-haired deacon rose with calm
Vermont upon his face.

He came forward, put his hard
Hand on the preacher's arm.
"Young man", said he, "you didn't do
That text you took no harm".

The young man's face was like the sun,
The church was his, he knew,
He knew rapture when he heard it—
He was a Vermonter, too.

The work of Ruby Altizer Roberts has appeared in numerous papers and magazines including the *New York Herald-Tribune, Wings*, etc. I happen to be one of the reviewers who likes very much to see a photograph of the poet, and there is a charming one in this, her first book, *Forever is Too Long* (The Wings Press).

A thoroughly personal poem is "Heartsease":

Into the gossamer of my dreams
You wove your garniture. Unasked you came
. . . I did not bid you go . . .
My barren desert was made green again
And flowers sprang up along my lonely way;
But when I knew you were a part of me
I was afraid. . . . I tried to struggle free—

To tear away the madness of your spell—
But will nor wishing could the texture rend
Alas, you weave too well.

And now at midnight when I wake to feel
Once more the keen swift pain of bitter longing—
My soul cries out, and listening for reply
Hears but the moan of night winds in the hills
. . . And life is empty as a shattered bowl.

The winds sob softly—rise in wave on wave—
A mad crescendo of tormenting music:
I pray for surcease and for you to take
These notes of my unhappiness and turn
And rearrange them into melody . . .
Cast it before the winds' aeolian harp
And they will gently play it back to me.

It would seem to the reader on meeting Mr. Lee Simonson for the first time through his first published book of poems, *Untended Grove* (Duell Sloane & Pearce, New York) that we have met a very fortunate man. As stage designer, critic of the arts, historian of the theatre, we find him now also a poet. A new note Mr. Simonson strikes in a long poem entitled "Elinor", in which one dear to him has gone beyond. We give the first, second, third and fifth verses of this longish poem:

Handful of dust that once was living laughter
  Daughter who cherished life with every breath,
I cannot see you in some dim hereafter
  Treading the timeless corridors of Death

But if, emerging from their ultimate portal
  You with some kindly God came face to face,
Who said to you, "Shriven of all things mortal
  You may ascend unto my seat of grace

And there with me share the unending light
  Of infinite wisdom beyond mortal span
And know the love and the compassionate might
  Wherewith I guide the erring heart of man",

Destroy me utterly and let me be
  Scattered further than dust but yet made one
By sudden, everlasting alchemy
  With wind and sky and air and sea and sun.

One of Mr. Simonson's sonnets follows:

Nothing is lost that once was happily given
And wholly lived and shared in love's embrace;
Within a world that knows no time or place
Their hours live on, though lovers have been shriven
In Death's confessional and vandal years
Rifle the shroud of loveliness. A villa stands

Untenanted; remorseless, unseen hands
Have locked its gate; relentless sunlight sears
Its patterned garden. But in the untended grove
Cypress and laurel keep the arch that wove
A shelter once and veil a firmament
Where no stars guide and none will rise again.
The oleander blooms, the random rain
Feeds hidden roots. Memory, like music, in the cool
Dusk cradles the heart and the silent pool
Slakes the parched, lonely lips of banishment.

Of *Dublin Poems*, by Seumas O'Sullivan (Creative Age Press), in an introduction Padraic Colum writes: "A very unusual thing comes to us from these poems—a sense of companionship. We feel that, once having read them, we will keep many of Seumas O'Sullivan's poems in mind and turn to them as to things we have readily become familiar with. The reason for this is that Seumas O'Sullivan, above everything else, is the poet of mood, and there is always a mood of his that companions a mood of ours—of wistfulness, exaltation, admiration, reverence, buoyancy, loneliness, revolt". In these 176 pages it would not be hard to find a sympathetic poem on any one of them. For example these three:

Evening

I will go out and meet the evening hours
And greet them one by one as friend greets friend,
Where many a tall poplar summit towers
On summit, shrines of quietness that send
Their silence through the blue air like a wreath
Of sacrificial flame unwavering
In the deep evening stillness, when no breath
Sets the faint tendrils floating on light wing
Over the long dim fields mist-islanded.
I will go out and meet them one by one,
And learn the things old times have left unsaid,
And read the secrets of an age long gone,
And out of twilight and the darkening plain
Build up all that quiet world again.

A Fiddler

All day long about the town,
He had wandered up and down
From street to street, from drink to drink;
At evening he began to think
"Better, far better, to be dead
Where no thought could find out my head;
Lying in some green place apart
No sorrow could find out my heart;
Laid in the quiet there alone
I should have all my dreams my own;
For, though they know not, when I play
(These fools), I give my dreams away".

The Ways of Amgus

I brought your letter with me to the fields,
And read it in the silence of the trees;
And, surely, only your own self had brought
A joy my heart holds holier than these,
Your wild and sweet and maidenly wise words,
That on the autumn grayness of my thought
Came flashing down like gold and silver birds.
Sweetheart, in your own praise I did you wrong,
For, wondering at the wisdom of your days,
And setting forth my wonder in a song,
I, too, forgot awhile, in this blind age,
That all the ways of Amgus are your ways
And all his wisdom is your heritage.

An impressive short poem we find in *Figure and Landscape*, by Emma Sahler Dakin, with a foreword by David Morton (Fine Editions Press):

Lover of God, the wilderness
Is a bright land to you,
Where changing light on holy hills
Brings beauty hourly new.

Lover of God, you do not frame
Your life. He forms each part,
You only love as His great love
Beats in your pulsing heart.

Lover of God, you do not pray.
He prays in you. His thought
Moulds all your mind, and His wide aims,
Unknowing, you have sought.

Lover of God, the universe
Is your great Father's home.
Wherever life's strange paths may lead,
Unto His arms you come.

Land of the Yankees, by Frederick W. Branch (Granite State Press) comes to me through Zo Elliott. We have the satisfaction of meeting a fine New Englander. I cannot resist giving you his dedication:

To My Wife, my sternest and most understanding critic

Here is a book I have made for you,
Letter and word and line,
Out of the things which you helped me do,
Blending your thoughts with mine.
Here on this page you shall take a bow,
Gladly I write it here,
I never sang till you taught me how:
This is your book, my dear.

We must pass the longer poems, lacking room, and present a picture poem of "October":

Each night the tide of Fall creeps up the hills
Across the homesteads of the whippoorwills,
Till to their tops they smolder in the haze
That grays the mornings of these Autumn days.
The sunlight strikes them into sudden flame.
The pine trees sigh and whisper at the shame
Of birches dancing naked in the breeze,
Of sumach, staid old oak and maple trees
Who, over night, have gone out of their heads
And dressed themselves in all these brazen reds:
Trading the long-worn monotones of June
For one, brief fling beneath the Hunter's Moon.

Harold Vinal, Secretary of The Poetry Society of America and founder and editor of the poetry magazine, *Voices,* which is now celebrating its twenty-fifth year of successful publication, tells me music was his first love, but he turned definitely to poetry after reading Rupert Brooks' sonnets. Harold Vinal has some six books of poetry to his credit and one volume of essays entitled *Attic for the Nightingale.*

The associates of Miss Elizabeth Browne tend their congratulations on her eighth book, *Crucible of Life* (A Bookfellow Book). Quoting from the author's credo, "We will write of the essence of things which cannot be denied, knowing that again and again they have withstood the acid test".

In *An Anthology of Famous English and American Poetry,* edited with introductions by William Rose Benet and Conrad Aiken (The Modern Library), we are reminded that "As for poetry's standing among modern Englishmen of action, one of the best recent anthologies has been compiled by a viceroy of India, Field Marshal Viscount Wavell (President of the Poetry Society of Great Britain), who, it seems, possesses a prodigious memory for English verse, as did Viscount Allenby, the High Commissioner for Egypt. . . . Not only have the British Isles possessed the most comprehensive and many-faceted of writers in Shakespeare, but the great luminaries of their poetry have been as different in style as Pope from Burns, Tennyson from Browning, Masefield from de la Mare. Let it be at once admitted that the Scotch and the Irish have contributed greatly to what we inclusively term English poetry. . . . In the dawn of the day of world freedom, governments may more truly convey the world-conscious desires of the common people everywhere. . . . But, in the last analysis, it is the poets who chiefly point the way, as they have always done. It is the poets who sense the weather of the world, and feel in which direction the wind of human history is blowing". Those who acquire this valuable book will be surprised by the omissions. And, why not! This reviewer finds much that she has dearly loved in this desirable anthology.

The Eternal Sea is an anthology of sea poetry compiled and edited by W. M. Williamson, drawings by Gordon Grant (Coward-McCann, Inc.). The lure of the sea catches all lovers of art and poetry. To be personal, in my introduction to the *Poetry Review,* now some twenty-five years as American Editor, I initiated a contest for poems on the sea. So many were so good that I was urged to make an anthology of a hundred.

Mr. Williamson says in his interesting introduction, "The sea is at once his inspiration and his despair". In this anthology, unlike mine, we find the voices of the long accepted writers of the sea. I am glad to find Mr. Vinal is included,

also David Morton and Archibald MacLeish. My anthology bore the foreword of Admiral Mark Kerr and Admiral Bradley A. Fiske. The prize was divided between Miss V. Sackville-West and Robert Hillyer, two fine sonnets. One of the reasons that men or women publish anthologies is that it allows them space to include their own creations and this is by way of saying that I am now going to give you a sonnet by Alice Hunt Bartlett from *The Sea Anthology* and which won Desmond McCarty's approbation,

The sea's great voice is but a sigh to-night,
A soft-recurrent and caressing sigh:
Beneath a starred and June-set midnight sky
It ebbs and flows on sands the moon turns white.
Translated to a lullaby, its might,
A murmured whim, a whispered word . . . And I
But seem to hear humanity's outcry . . .
The million millions . . . calling for more light!
Like eagles longing to exploit the air,
They would possess all worlds, enlist the will!
Set free their spirits from the earth's dull care,
And all resisting barriers make nil . . .
Like that great sea, to-night so quiet there,
What missions do these forces vast fulfil?

Thank you, Mr. George Jean Nathan for your revealing *Theatre Book of the Year* 1945-1946 (Alfred Knopf). I heartily agree with you that there was not much you could praise of the Season 1945-1946. I have not been able to go to the theatre during that time. After reading your book, I am not sorry. I agree also that there should be no censorship. We should not deny the theatre goers, who pay for what they like, their happiness? But I am always thinking there is a way of doing differently. The great personalities of the many that have passed crowd upon me and echo "Yes".

In this volume of some three hundred pages, I am happy and I believe you will be happy, to find Mr. Nathan dwells on the value of the play "Candide" and again he approves "Show Boat" and also the play that has caused much comment, "Deep Are The Roots".

Marguerite Janvrin Adams sends me a personal statement on *Modern Poetry and The Poet*". Mrs. Adams is well known on this side of the Atlantic through her many gifted lyrics, and I am hoping she will gather these in a book. We often imagine writers have nothing to do but write, but Mrs. Adams is, outside of her writing, a wonderful mother, with a boy in the war and one daughter, a portrait painter who recently lost her young husband at Luzon, Philippines, and a second daughter whose husband is also in the Army.

In analyzing what is the underlying principle of modern poetry it would be wise to scan a moment the era in which that poetry has had its birth, growth and maturity. This is an age of swift change. Chaos, from which so much has developed, was the foster parent of much creative force. Transition must presage a final crisis and an eventual peace.

I can remember a time not too far in the background when the romantic aspect of life was in the ascendence. In such days poets' lyrical outbursts of temperament were the vogue, and it was an hour of pressed violets between the covers of a book, gardenias bruised yet sweet with fragrance standing upon a

dressing table after a ball, and quatrains from some favourite poem sent to a lovely lady to convey a message of devotion. Imagine anything being romantic, and not only romantic, but sufficiently quotable to be enclosed in a love-letter to-day, unless one drew the verses from that same book of verse of the past!

One of the quarrels that I have with a great deal of our modern poetry is it does not seep into one's consciousness and hold a place there for future reference, for future dispensation. However there are many moderns who would take exception to my words, and consider that the "Age of Innocence" was an age of baubels and inconsequential versifying. I will amplify by saying that if such poets as Edna St. Vincent Millay, Robinson Jeffers, and Carl Sandborg have closely followed that romantic age and have necessarily been somewhat influenced by it, then the romantic singing was not in vain.

Let us glimpse for a moment the young poets of the present time, influenced by a very personal reaction to what is going on in the world about them, which, as I have said, has been chaos. It takes a balanced judicial mind, and an imaginative one as well, to storm the gates of stress, and out of things that are chaotic, produce something sane and something immortal. Attempting the almost impossible task myself: that of writing poetry, and having a touch of the poet's wildness of imagination,—I refuse to be thrilled by what is incomprehensible to me in verse.

The vague, non-understandable has no allure, for I can at will swing into such realms of fancy by myself, and find that, from my own mind, it is a far easier task, and a more enjoyable one than the attempt to analyze the vague flights of other would-be poets. Let us again have some well wrought sonnets such as Shakespeare's, Rossetti's, and Elizabeth Barrett Browning's, and lyricists that pack within a quatrain the music of the spheres. This is a plea not for lack of progression but for a building upon a sound foundation—separating the wheat from the chaff, for seeking the truth, and "the truth shall make you free".

It is too early to estimate the value of the poetry that the war will have given us. The perspective is too close and the repercussions of too much hate and sacrifice and suffering have gone into it to such an extent that the reverberations of it all probably obliterate its faults and its virtues. When the smoke has cleared and the dust blown away, and we go back to homes again and sing of the harvest and the horizons of peace, perhaps we will be able to hear and see more truly.

I venture to say that out of pain will come much beauty, out of destruction a phoenix with wide wingspread. And, loving all metrical, musical wonderments of words that fall into a pattern of cadence and strength. I shall rejoice in the fact that a tempestuous, discordant age is transitory, and that good modern poetry and poets will sing themselves into each nation's development, so that our children's children will quote a memorable passage or mark a stanza in a book with admiration for this age that now is ours.

Mabel Gregory Wuesthoff, Richmond, California, whose third book of poems I noticed with appreciation in the last issue of *The Poetry Review,* sends the following statement: To me poetry is the most inspiring as well as the most perfect interpreter of human ideals and emotions. Intimately related to music, it possesses a strength of expression not to be found elsewhere; and though it may be ridiculed and scoffed at, the truth and sheer beauty of it cannot be destroyed. With the general let-down and loss of human integrity, so noticeable after World War I, poetry suffered its greatest degradation, through what was called "stark realism", —something that no one yet has been able to define. Beauty and truth, however,

simply cannot be eliminated from life, and any attempt to exalt the ugly and false ends in failure.

This second World War, with all its horror and loss, has been brought home forcibly to most of the world, thanks to our effective means of communication; and now humanity is struggling to learn how to live together without recurrent periods of slaughter.

To-day is the true renaissance of poetry and of all beautiful and helpful things, because the effort to encourage and build up a world of peaceful brotherhood is our immediate necessity. Those poets who found it so hard to write during the war, now have every incentive to write and live for peace.

ALICE HUNT BARTLETT.

CONSULTANT IN POETRY

I am pleased to be able to announce the appointment of Karl J. Shapiro to serve during the next twelve months as Consultant in Poetry in English. Mr. Shapiro was born in Baltimore, Maryland, on November 10, 1913, attended the University of Virginia in 1932-33, and Johns Hopkins University from 1936-1939. The following year he took a course in library training at the Enoch Pratt Free Library in Baltimore. He served in the United States Army from March, 1941, to July, 1945, three years with the medical corps in the South Pacific, and one year in the Office of Strategic Services in Washington.

He began writing while at the University of Virginia, and since 1934 his poems have appeared in the *Nation*, the *New Yorker*, the *New Republic*, *Harper's*, and other magazines, and in anthologies of contemporary verse. *Person, Place and Thing*, his first full-length book of poems, appeared in 1942. He published *The Place of Love* in Australia in 1942, and *V-Letter and Other Poems* in the United States in 1944.

Through these publications and anthologies, and through two of *Poetry's* annual awards—the Jeannette Sewell Davis Prize of 1941 and the Levinson Prize of 1942—Karl Shapiro became well known to readers of poetry. He was one of three men in active war service who received a Guggenheim award of $2,500 for creative work. In the same year, 1944, he also received a special award of $1,000 from the American Academy of Arts and Letters.

In July, 1945, he began work under the Guggenheim award and wrote a book of poems which is nearly completed for early publication. It will include poems written during and since the war and will deal in part with Mr. Shapiro's war experiences and his reactions to the post-war world.

Library of Congress, Washington, D.C. LUTHER H. EVANS.

I so much appreciate and look forward to my copy of POETRY REVIEW, which does bring a strong sense of fellowship of the spirit with all poets and poetry-lovers. In Sir Quiller Couch's *The Art of Writing* he says: "Recollect that in poesy as in every other human business, the more there are who practise it the greater will be the chance of someone's reaching perfection. It is the impetus of the undistinguished host that flings forward a Diomed or a Hector"—a thought which may bring comfort and inspiration to members who cannot take very direct participation in the activities of the Society, and find it hard to make space in their lives to practice the art of poetry. However small may be our hard-won development of sensitive and understanding awareness, it will be worth while. With every good wish for the extension of the work of the Society in 1947 —CONSTANCE E. DALEY, Lewes.

The War Development of a Russian Poet

Selected Poems by Mikola Bazhan, a Stalin Prize Winner
(Translations from the Ukrainian, edited by Pavel Antokolsky)

(Special to The Poetry Review from Moscow)

"Immortality", Mikola Bazhan's poem about Sergei Kirov, has won the author merited popularity among wide circles of readers. The personality of this great fighter for socialism, which is embodied in the three narratives that make up the poem, is imposing and beautiful. A fiery youth who performs his first revolutionary feat during a demonstration by the workers; a mature general of the revolution who on the eve of battle dreams of the victory of socialism; and an outstanding Soviet statesman who works for the building of a new society, such is Kirov's road in life as depicted in the poem.

"Immortality", which has seen many editions in the Russian language, is also included in "Selected Poems", recently off the press. The emotions reflected in this volume, which is a collection of verse written during the past decade of the poet's life, are the emotions inspired by the labour and heroism of the new man. These are the emotions of the poems that occupy the most important places in the book (a series of poems called "Stalingrad Notebook", and the poem "Immortality"). These same life-confirming traits and heroic deeds are to be found in the verse about Uzbekistan and Georgia, in "Borislav's Tales" and in the poem "Daniel of Galich" (1942).

Most of these writings, composed before the great Patriotic war, are dedicated to the creation of a new society, the theme of life conquering death. The poet takes us across a mountainous road to Tmogvi. Grim is the chaos of the wild Caucasus and the ruins of the ancient town, destroyed by wars and the ravages of time. Everything here speaks of ruin, of great and terrible battles of the past:

> "We, the living, look at the fissures
> and scars, at the traces of battles
> on skulls, at the crumbling, vaulted
> temples, we look at these as at death".

But in contrast to this picture, the poet paints his creative, life-giving vision of the world:

> "Woe to him who fixes his gaze for
> long upon the signs of death. We
> glorify the passionate concern of
> people whose life is truly alive,
> who, toiling and triumphant, will
> understand not death but words of
> immortality".

In his verse about Tamerlane ("The Tomb of Timur") the poet dedicates irate, ironical words to the memory of this conqueror: "He is death deaf and dumb",

> "It is not he the conquering-warrior
> who brings the world wrath and the
> sword, that is worthier of immortality
> than the words of this ancient book".

Thus, as far back as 1937 did the poet define his attitude towards life and death, towards war and peace.

Therefore, when the war broke out, Bazhan accepted it as a new test for his heroes, a test, however, which could not break their faith in life, their powerful

creative spirit. The leit-motif of the "Stalingrad Notebook" is found in the words:

"Go through catastrophe, that thou may'st
live on in future victory".

and Kirov's

"Live thou the life of the Bolshevik
unknowing death!"

In this unswerving, luminous faith in the triumph of life over death, a faith characteristic of Soviet people, Bazhan's heroes found that unparallelled strength which proved so necessary for victory in the Patriotic War, so necessary to the surmounting of incredible obstacles and dangers. This explains why Bazhan's "Stalingrad Notebook" touches us so deeply.

"Buildings burn, and everywhere—mutilation,
And death howls over all, and ruin roars.
Only one thing does not give way, lives on—
The dauntless heart of man".

These verses are a hymn to the insuperable power of human heart, to the indomitable will of man to conquer the beast and once more establish happiness on his earth. But in them we find numerous other traits characteristic of the Soviet man at war. A street battle has subsided for a moment. A soldier bursts into a house. In the misty smoke of a once cosy dwelling, he sees the havoc of destruction. His hand touches a toy on the floor. It is a broken, clay horse, just like the one his own little son had pulled about in his own home.

"Sitting on the cement floor, the exhausted Grigory lights up a cigarette, in a doze. He lacks the strength to wipe the sweat and the dirt from his face. He hears the measured sound of his heart, which beats, full-blooded. In his weary body . . . And he suddenly falls asleep with fatigue and exhaustion".

Weariness! That, too, is a trial. (The battle—"there is work for us!" the commander says). Terrible weariness seems to have fettered the body of the hero for all time:

"But no sooner is the order given
Than sleep instantly is brushed from the eyes
And only rage possesses his body".

Once more his body becomes "light and angry, as a flame". The soldier glides along, crawls flat on his belly, stops dead at every moment under the death that hangs over him, that is scattered all over. At last—a new feat. And . . . an explosion close by:

"Something struck. An avalanche. Under his
feet lies the purple sky. To keep from
falling. To stand, and fight, and wait
for help—to spite all the devils!"

And there he stands. Once again an incredible weariness takes possession of him for an instant after the superhuman efforts with which "he defended an inch of ground near Stalingrad".

In his poem, "In a Ravine", we get a picture of war as oppressive, abusive labour for the sake of life and happiness. That is the attitude of Soviet soldiers towards war, the attitude of the people of socialism, in whose outlook on life labour and heroism occupy first place.

The war theme is treated even more fully in the poem "At the Command Post". Here we do not see the battle itself, but that tremendous, complicated

mechanism which must be put into motion before the coming of the "new day of a gigantic ominous battle. A day of wrath. Stubbornness. Movement forward".

The finest lines of the "Stalingrad Notebook" reveal the poet's realism. The idea that "it is not in inkwells that the vessel seeks the storm", which the romanticist Bazhan once merely stated as a formula, has now found embodiment in his creative method.

The war brought Bazhan close to the people in a new way. The man who is the builder of socialism and its champion became visible to the poet in all the aspects of his character, life, behaviour. And the artist, without any attempt at embellishment, incarnated his image in his work, making it utterly real and alive.

Bazhan has retained the same romantically tense mood in this verse as in his earlier writing: the tale is told impetuously, stirringly. And the subject matter has also remained tense. But, enriched with realism in the unfolding of the characters, motives, the situation, the lines of the "Stalingrad Notebook" cannot be received as conventional or romantically exaggerated. Throughout the poem there is a feeling of human warmth that also lends conviction and directness.

With the sharp eye of the realist, the poet notes how, at dawn "the fire which has been red, turned black", how "the half-tracks, back-firing, tirelessly tote their load, so tremendous and mysterious", how the tanks "with their steel disturb the silence of the southern deserts and the aromatic, blue wormwood, which has grown into the fresh clods of the trenches".

Bazhan is a subtle artist, a man of great poetic gift. One can judge of the scope of his abilities from his classical translation into the Ukrainian of Mayakovsky's verse as well as of the Georgian epic, "Knight in the Tiger's Skin", by Shota Rustaveli. His wealth of descriptive means, the intricacy of his compositions, the plasticity of his images are as much a part of his poetry as is its philosophical depth. These qualities in the original make the task of the translators of the volume, which has just been put out by the State Literary Publishing House, a very responsible one. One must admit that the poet, Pavel Antokolsky (the editor of the book) has succeeded with his translations better than anyone else. The verses from the "Stalingrad Notebook", which he has translated, as well as those about Uzbekistan and Georgia, in spite of the fact that the translator does not always give an exact reproduction of the original, convey the basic feeling of the Ukrainian poet with extreme faithfulness. This may also be said of the translations by David Brodsky.

* * *

The Novgorod Regional Publishing House has released the first post-war volume of poetry by local poets, the book being called "In Battle and At Work". It contains 33 poems by young poets.

An Australian Colonel's Odyssey

ONE of the most interesting souvenirs of World War II's prison camps is a 50,000 word poem *Slaves of the Samurai*, written in microscopic script on twenty small pieces of paper and smuggled out of a Japanese prison camp wrapped round the false lining of a tin of talcum powder. The author of *Slaves of the Samurai* is Colonel Wilfred Kent Hughes, Australian soldier, politician, scholar and sportsman. Its subject is his thoughts and experiences during his three-and-a-half years as a prisoner of the Japanese.

To conserve his small stock of paper Colonel Kent Hughes transcribed his manuscript in a handwriting so small that few people can read it without a magnifying glass. He used an abbreviated longhand script, made no corrections, and ran his lines on. Before the Oxford University Press could handle the manuscript for publication, it had to be photographed and enlarged on a screen for typing. The twenty manuscript pages were expanded into 235 pages of typescript.

Slaves of the Samurai begins with a historical survey of Japan's rise to power and a picture of Singapore's progress from the rich and glamorous trading city of Singapura to the modern fortress of the east.

The Malayan campaign is seen as a symphony, with an introductory tune of tropic leisure, quickening as the first bombs fall in Raffles Square. With the growing pressure of Japanese attacks from the air and through the jungle and the perpetual shortening of the lines of defence round Singapore the poem gathers in tragic intensity. It rushes to a powerful climax of the last days of slaughter in Singapore and dies away to the pitiful sound of the bugles signalling "Cease fire".

The story of the Australians' early months of captivity in Changi is told with realistic detail that etches a vivid picture of prison camp life. One sees doctors struggling to save lives in the bare shells of barracks buildings; cooks working miracles to produce "a novel type of culinary New Deals"; engineers experimenting with mineral vaseline to feed jam-tin lamps; records clerks making and checking each individual's inventory; ordnance men who

> ". . . collected in a shed
> The useful odds and ends, until no shred
> Of clothing, parts of a machine, or clump
> Of twisted wire was not put in the dump
> And sorted out in heaps for future use."

From the picture of their daily activities one gets an unforgettable picture of the fortitude and resource of these Australians of the 8th Division. It is quite evident that within a few months of the fall of Singapore the captive Australian Army was working as a military unit, with a magnificent spirit of co-operation and courage.

One of the poem's most moving passages describes the first Anzac Day in Changi, April 25, 1942, when wreaths of exotic tropical flowers were laid beneath a cross in memory of those who died on the cold and barren shores of Gallipoli 27 years before. From Changi, Colonel Kent Hughes and about 300 senior officers of British, Dutch, Australian and U.S. Forces were shipped across the south China Seas to Karenko in Formosa.

In this and subsequent journeys by ship and train to prison camps in southern Japan and Manchuria, Kent Hughes' descriptions of the passing seasons and changing landscapes provide a quiet natural background for the tragic human story.

A canto grimly entitled "Hell" describes the voyage of the Oryoku from Keelung to Kyushu:

> "For two interminably weary weeks
> The living mummies—naked human freaks
> Existed like some tortured denizens
> Far underground in purgatorial pens.
> Ten minutes was the longest they could stay
> For roll-call up on deck at dusk each day,
> Though twice, stark naked on the public pier,

For any passer-by to see and jeer,
They were paraded for a hose-down bath".

But the record is not all of horrors. There are flashes of humour, as when the senior officers are transferred from Changi, generals in motor cars, brigadiers in buses, and colonels in three-ton trucks.

"The other ranks, astounded by the sight,
Could not refrain from laughing at their plight
'Oh Bill! Come quick! A sight you'll never see!
Two lorry-loads of robin ruddy breasts
Packed tightly in two ruddy iron chests!"

Throughout the poem there is a strong and dignified philosophy that enabled this Australian to maintain a calm and resolute mind throughout his sufferings.

"The searing brand may scar the skin.
The brutal blow may break a bone
Starvation makes the blood run thin.
But mind is man's, and man's alone".

Slaves of the Samurai is the work of a man whose active brain could not endure idleness. His only previous book, *Modern Crusaders*, the history of the Australian Light Horse, was written during a fortnight's sea voyage in 1919.

During his imprisonment by the Japanese he also kept a 500,000-word diary hidden in the corrugated cardboard packing in which shallow excavations had been shaved with a razor blade.

Poetry is a new departure for this distinguished Australian, who has achieved success in several different fields of activity. When World War I broke out, young Wilfred, who was then 18, had just been chosen Victorian Rhodes Scholar for 1914—the only Victorian schoolboy who has ever received this high honour. He at once joined the Australian Army, and served with the Australian Light Horse in Gallipoli, Palestine, Sinai and Syria. He was four times mentioned in despatches and was awarded the Military Cross in 1916.

On his demobilisation Major Kent Hughes took up his Rhodes scholarship at Christ Church, Oxford, taking his B.A. with honours in modern history in 1922. While at Oxford he upheld the high sporting reputation of Australia's Rhodes scholars. He captained the University ski team, and represented the University in athletics and lacrosse, winning his half blue in both of these sports. He also represented Australia in the quarter-mile hurdles of the Olympic games and the British Empire against U.S.A. in 1920, and won the 440 yards hurdles championship of England in 1922. On his return to Australia he entered the publishing and printing business in Melbourne. In 1927 he stood for the Victorian Parliament and was elected Nationalist (Conservative) member for Kew in the Victorian Legislative Assembly. He had a rapid rise in political circles, being appointed secretary to the McPherson Cabinet in 1929 and honorary Minister in 1932. He was Minister for Labour and Transport in 1934 and 1935.

MARGARET LAWRENCE.

Having purchased one or two copies of the REVIEW from railway bookstalls, I have come to the conclusion that it is the only poetry magazine that affords modern verse which is at once coherent and (to a large extent) properly moulded.

Mine was one of the poetic dramas, I fancy, that dropped out of the recent competition owing to lack of stagecraft. I shall ply the REVIEW with sundry efforts and hope (rather vaguely) for better things. I am one of the longhaired flippant dreamy tribe that were once respected as poets, and now seem to be scorned as superfluities in the Age of the Atom!—G. A. P. FEATHERSTON, S.W.6.

The Premium Editor's Report

It would be difficult for me to believe that these critical reflections of mine could be of any real value to my competitors if it were not for the encouragement my credulity receives from reading what is, in other walks of life, called fan-mail. This, I hasten to say, contains no fulsome praise either of my person or my ability, but does convey the impression that my remarks are appreciated and even studied. But error still persists and the tedious task which I have just performed has not been lightened appreciably by all the doubtlessly dim illumination which I have shed. However Rome was not built in a day, and we must keep at it.

My mind, on this occasion, has been conditioned for its task by a persisting recollection of a more than usually idiotic criticism of Alfred Tennyson by W. H. Auden. Cats, it is said, may look at kings and for all I know may even caterwaul at Majesty. This, at all events, has happened now, and a major poet has been assailed by a litterateur with the epithet, stupid. It is true that the outbreak of the Crimean War was not the signal for Tennyson's retirement to the U.S.A. and this may be accounted as unintelligent by Mr. Auden, but what the latter clearly does not understand is that to be a poet, even a great one, the question of mental quality is of insignificant importance compared with the spiritual, because only by the latter can we be touched, to experience that mysterious involuntary nerve reaction which the "modern" Mr. Auden would call, contemptuously enough, a thrill. Tennyson is not an equal favourite with everyone, but it is more than idle to deny him greatness and, moreover, a greatness which was achieved by a natural subjugation of a pure literary talent, quite beyond Mr. Auden's valuation, to an emotional precipience which fate has decreed that his critic cannot even imagine. Mr. Auden's criticism on the grounds of stupidity is, after all, as pertinent to the question as his statement that in youth Tennyson looked like a gypsy and in age like a dirty old monk. Irrelevance is the mark of poor criticism.

So it was not very surprising that I should be watchful, throughout my examination of your entries, for those signs of cerebration, so dear to Mr. Auden, and for those thrills which apparently he does not even recognise; and it is painful to admit that there were more budding Audens than potential Tennysons among you. Having a somewhat stupid love of poetry (in the Tennysonian sense) my plan is to read with one ear cocked for that sudden whisper of mysterious excitement which attends the touch of inspiration, reserving a mere admiration for those bright ideas, clever techniques and literary adornments with which Mr. Auden is concerned. I do not decry these things, but they are literature not poetry, and one might as well elect a house painter to the Selection Committee of the Royal Academy as appoint a literary gent to evaluate a poet.

But to return to more important matters than the carpings of the intelligentsia at things beyond their ken, it was not quite so good a competition as usual. We will blame the season, if you like, for the recession and disregarding the spate of unseasonable spring poems which I have just read, await the real arrival of the primrose and the daffodil for that resurgance of your talent which is so uncontrollable by the intellect. But in the meantime there are matters of technique which can be discussed. You are not always grammatical, possibly from some idea that poetic license absolves you. It, of course, does not, and

strict grammatical construction is a primary essential of versification. Further there is quite an addiction with some of you to the use of abbreviations—"I'll" for "I will," "We've" for "We have," "e'er" for "ever," and a heap of others. Metrical weaknesses are not solved in this way, but emphasized, and you may only use our great language with a proper regard for its dignity if I am to approve your work. The overcoming of any prosodic difficulty must and can be absolute, leaving no trace of the conflict behind it to disfigure your lines; and it is no answer either, to leave a passage obscure rather than resort to surgical methods. Anyone who aspires to write verse should disabuse his mind of the heresy that words may be tampered with as in colloquial (slipshod?) speech, or that, in the interests of poetic art, they may be used casually or with a high hand. Their exact meaning and syntactical function (if I may coin a word) must be respected if you are to escape the suspicion of not knowing your mother tongue or of being a poor performer with it.

The temporary recession in your creative powers, which I have already noted, is shown only in the shorter lists of names which receive special mention and is not a reflection upon them, for my standards are as absolute as the subtlety of the task permits and these competitors are not merely the best of the bunch but have merited their distinction.

The premium is this time undivided and is awarded to Muriel Spark of Lancaster Gate, London, for a trio of sonnets most impressive in sustained power and with lyricism upon a note whose depth is a sure sign of their inspired origin. It should be noted how simple these sonnets are and how easy of comprehension for all their imaginative vigour and the technical difficulty of this form. But let them speak for themselves.

AUTUMN

I

The leaves descending are forsaken now
Like angels dispossessed of Paradise,
Unwitting of the provident device
That shapes a forest from the withered bough.
The wasted ash-wand, sprig of jaded yew
Nurture the meadows of a century
Wherein these woods will know the stricken tree
Woven in gossamer, distilled in dew.

No resurrection more magnificent
Will quicken the dead leaf that falls to-day
Than shall awake my dust from its repose.
With some new splendour will my clay be blent,
Reflected in a star's remotest ray
Or in the palest tincture of a rose.

II

Then let me call the leaves to hear my word
That in their final anguish they perceive
To what design their destiny will cleave,
By what sweet law the sleeping mould is stirred.
And let me whisper to the falling flower

The certain prophecy of her rebirth,
And though the petal perish in the earth
She will rejoice before her passing hour.

But born a thousand ages, they desire
No consolation more, and if I spoke
My words would fall where now the dry leaves lie.
Promise and leaf would feed the autumn fire,
The echo evanescent as the smoke
That dwindles in the uncommenting sky.

III

All substance will avenge its bitter fall
Where frond and flesh take exquisite redress
In transformation that will stir no less
The fleeting thought, the whim ephemeral.
About these trees forgotten passions brood
Where lichen of a thousand years will cling;
Discarded ecstacy, old sorrowing
Implant a sapling-shoot to mark the mood.

There is no lost desire so fugitive
But in its fragrant day will flower again,
No thwarted hope, but succulent will rise,
Recumbent forests in my spirit live,
Rivers and seas are cradled in my brain
And in my heart a sleeping planet lies.

The Highly Commended list contains poems but little inferior but I could find none which might justly claim to share the prize. That by Celia Randall "The Broken Song" came closest by reason of its emotional power, but it is so short that it could deserve no more than the honour of inclusion in this list.

Wilfred H. Bartlett, Calverleigh
L. E. Brodie, Dublin
Cynthia Palmer, Huntingdon
Celia Randall, Holywood, Co. Down

The Commended list is nearly as long as it was last time and it is upon this by no means humble level that competition was keenest. That is no matter for regret and while we can find twenty-six poems as good as these in our Premium box the competition will be amply justified.

Vere Arnot, Walton-on-Thames
Elsie M. Banister, Ainsdale
Catherine Blakiston, Milford
William Booth, Wolverhampton
F. T. Bratton, Wallingford
J. T. Brockway, Den Haag, Holland
T. E. Casson, Pennington
Joan L. Cherry, Streatham
Edmund Cooper, Stockport
Elizabeth Faucett, Stanmore
Winifred J. Griffith, Wrexham
L. Meyrick Jones, Cheltenham
W. A. G. Kemp, Northwood
Eric Knight, Barnt Green
"Mariana", Sedbergh
G. W. T. Mosedale, Taunton
Nancy Pollok, Tettenhall
Norma E. Smith, Halifax N.S.
James Steel, Wolsingham
H. Storey, Thornton
Harry Surtees, Esher
Muriel Symmons, Salcombe

Jessie B. Heard, Bristol 7
Gwenda Hollander, Solihull
Odette Tchernine, Guildford
Winifred B. Wall, Liverpool 20

ON THE USE AND MIS-USE OF RHYME

Rarely indeed do I disagree with the practical remarks of the Premium Editor, whose constructive criticism has been of inestimable value to me personally. But certain comments of his on the use and mis-use of rhyme in his report in the Jan.-Feb. POETRY REVIEW seem to me a little too pedantic, and are likely to discourage the perspiring poet unnecessarily. Rhyme is, of course, important, but not supremely so. To expect that the rhyming word "should always be in itself a word of singular importance to the line" is surely to over-estimate its value in a poem. Neither should the use of a preposition in rhyming be condemned in so forthright a manner. It may be no argument to state that Walter de la Mare, among the giants, makes frequent use of the word 'of' to rhyme with 'love', and even 'if' to rhyme with 'live' (a bad rhyme certainly), but that he does so naturally and with pleasing effect must surely carry due weight. By way of illustration, may I quote from "Silence":

"When, all at peace, two friends at ease alone
Talk out their hearts—yet still,
Between the grace-notes of
The voice of love
From each to each
Trembles a rarer speech,
And with its presence every pause doth fill."

Must we say that the poet here exhibits a difficulty he could not resolve, or that his ear is improperly attuned? I think not. Rather it would seem he used the rhyme deliberately.

There are occasions when it is necessary to introduce a subdued rhyme. I contend that the use of a preposition in such circumstances is justified and encourages that easy flow which the Premium Editor rightly considers so important. I might also argue that the use of a near-rhyme, or half-rhyme, has its legitimate place in poetry. Indeed, when used spontaneously the near-rhyme evokes an unusual emotional response as, for example, Edmund Blunden's "In a Country Churchyard":

"The dog-rose and ox-daisies on
Time's tide come twirling,
And bubble and die where Joy is gone—
Sleep well, my darling."

This opens up a very big question, however; one too vast to explore in the space of a letter.

I will content myself with quoting two writers who champion the traditions of English poetry, and who would appear to support my view. In No. 1 POETRY REVIEW, 1946, Herbert Palmer writes: "There is only one law to observe: Don't obscure your meaning by an exact rhyme; don't be pedantic; have the courage to be makeshift if the content will not allow you to be exact".

And the second quotation, taken from the Sept.-Oct. POETRY REVIEW, 1945: "Technical imperfections are, after all, but technical and, unless they are unmusical or unrhythmic, can be disregarded in a poem as good as this (Miss Kenward's "Exequy") and debited, as it were, to poetic licence. The ability to snatch a grace beyond the reach of art . . . is something which we should

encourage . . . and I cannot accept the implication . . . that there should be any such thing as 'scientific accuracy of harmonious expression' in any ultra-rigid sense which forbids the graceful variation, the impromptu grace-note, or the occasional flouting of the pure rhyme for some equal but lawless charm". With which sentiments I entirely agree. The author? The Premium Editor himself!

Culverleigh. W. H. BARTLETT.

The Premium Editor writes: Mr. Wilfred Bartlett's letter is, of course, an attempted self-justification, since it was he who offended my sense of what is correct in classic prosody by daring to end a line with "of" and then rhyming it with "love". I will strive to be as courteous to him as he is to me, but I can find nothing at all in his letter to support his case beyond new assertions of his point of view. He does indeed attempt to call supporting evidence by citing examples of the same slip-shoddery perpertrated by well-known poets. He merely invites the retort that two wrongs, or even three, do not make a right, and that he should be content to make his own mistakes without copying those of others.

Mr. Bartlett himself suggests that it is no argument to say that others have taken prosodic liberties even while he describes one of his exemplars, Mr. Walter de la Mare, as a giant. Alas the giants have perished from the land, and if not exactly prehistoric are certainly extinct. It is a vain thing for any poet to hero-worship. He should, he must, be self-sufficient.

Finally, my critic attempts to confound me out of my own mouth. He quotes my defence of Miss Jean Kenward's poem "Exequy" from a similar attack by another correspondent. In that defence I said that "technical imperfections are, after all, but technical and unless they are unmusical or unrhythmic can be disregarded". Why does Mr. Bartlett think it pertinent to recall this? His own lapse from technical perfection was, in my view, both unmusical and poor in rhythm, and there is therefore no relevance for me in this point which he seeks to make against me. I certainly do not, in my defence of Miss Kenward, applaud her technical imperfections when I say that, in view of the music and rhythm of her poem, these may for the occasion be disregarded.

The point about rhyme, if we may for the moment exclude "near-rhyme" (which is not rhyme at all), is that if it be used it should be done perfectly or with only very minor licence; and not only that, the rhyme must be a word which does not leave the line in a fragmentary state up in the air, but be of significant importance to it, and as inevitable as death. Rhyme is only supportable so, and is much better abolished than clumsily or inadequately employed.

Mr. Herbert Palmer's views of rhyme quoted by Mr. Bartlett, do not seem to advance the argument very much. He is reported to have said, in effect, "Don't obscure your meaning by an exact rhyme if you can't find an equally exact one which does not". I agree profoundly; with the addition that harder work in revision will assuredly free the poet from any necessity to follow Mr. Palmer's further advice and use a poor rhyme in the interest of clarity. That is why, *vide* Mr. Bartlett, I am pedantic on this point.!

For details of the regular premium and other verse competitions, see page vi.

SONNET RHYMES

Your critic, writing of my book *Clay Speaks of the Fire* has not one word to say of the contents of my poems, which if they have any being whatever, are compact of thought and inspired by sincerely felt emotion. But of the rhyming of my sonnets he has something offensive to say. I cannot otherwise regard the use of the word "shameful". It is amazing to hear that because a small sect that uses the sonnet form limits itself to a specific rhyme scheme (to be exact two rhyme-schemes only), therefore all others must be so limited. There are limits to the forms that the sonnet rhymes may take, but these have been largely extended since the form was taken from Petrarch and the Italians of that time, and at this date we can no longer adhere to Lord Alfred Douglas's rules for the sestet. It is also a major error of your rules for your sonnets, given in your excellent review, to limit them to two possible sestet forms only—if this is believed to be based on ancient practice, allow me to point out that Petrarch did not limit himself to these two. I quote from *Dalle Rime in Morte di Laura* the sonnet commencing *Ne mai pietosa,* and another commencing *Io son si stanco sotto,* merely as two examples, there are others with divergences from the two sestet rhyme-schemes in question. Again, with its first introduction to English, the sonnet was given a couplet ending when the expressed idea demanded it, and often when it did not, but this is bad work. I mention Wyatt, Surrey, Spenser, as names of the first users, who varied the ending with a couplet. The Shakespearean and bastard form of the sonnet with its mechanical humdrum of rhymes and irritating invariable end in a couplet, needs a Shakespeare to make it bearable. Also, it followed the use of the couplet in the Petrarchan form, and did not suggest its use therein.

One cannot write of one's own work without apparent egotism, but I wish to emphasise that I use variants of the rhyme system in the Petrarchan form of the sonnet always for a use in making a greater beauty. With the thought or emotion of my sonnets, as in all my poems, I vary the rhymes and the metre to increase or diminish the effect, as sound may be so altered in music; or to lead the idea from the octet in the sonnet to the sestet, and there ring the words by rhyme, to and fro, intensifying meaning and emotion. I rhyme (in the sestet particularly) to carry the eye and the sound, the dramatic or undramatic thought, to a satisfying conclusion. And if the couplet helps me I use it, if two rhymes only are needed I spend hours to find them, if three I use three, and I alter and plan so that they fall precisely where I need them, even if a sonnet needs months to its final finishing.

There is a craze, for these last decades, to be obvious users of new methods amongst those who would be poets at the small price that novelty and broken-prose demands, but because they are so clearly pretenders does not mean that there is no new way of using the grand ancient forms of the English language, in verse, to a greater beauty. Only, indeed, by that method can a poet ring clearly amongst men his unique music.

Dublin, Jan. 27. EDMUND LOBO.

MILTON'S PARADISE

Who is Mr. Howard Parsons to say that I have derived more benefit from my books than from my beer? I bestow great affection upon both and their solace is divided in equal proportions. Meanwhile I steadfastly maintain that Milton's paradise is anything but a vacuum. His heaven was not only conceived from the multi-coloured doctrines of his day but from a very real delight in the good things of this world. Unlike our modern psychologists, he provided paradise with

a fountain that flowed forth wine, referred to it throughout as "th' ambrosial fount", venerated it whenever opportunity arose and took care to make no mention whatever of purely intellectual pursuits save in regard to their disastrous consequence upon that villain Satan.

This paradise, I say, is overcrowded with material aids to well-being. I feel that Mr. Howard Parsons has fingers itching to tear down the fountain, disrupt the rivers and translate the song of birds into elementary harmonics. I picture a giant blackboard with Archimedes demonstrating with celestial chalk what he discovered lately in his bath. All of which points an important moral to be read from "Paradise Lost"—that the sins of the flesh are invariably venial while those of the intellect unfailingly deadly.

It is difficult indeed to draw a hard line between envy and ambition and perhaps I misled in suggesting that ambition is always laudable. When it becomes destructive it certainly is not but, perhaps, it is only when envy holds the reins, that it threatens to destroy. With regard to lexicographic definitions I would point out that it is to some advantage to take these in conjunction with other works of a more philosophic nature which place envy among the seven deadly sins.

It appears to me from Mr. Parsons' paper and from his subsequent correspondence that he makes use of the term "hero" with far too great a liberality. He asserts that the question is not what constitutes a hero but whether Milton made one of Satan. By his standard then, anyone laying sufficient claim to notoriety, behaving in an adequately scandalous manner or in any other way becoming the object of vast public concern is a hero be there no blacker villain on the face of the earth. This is the very antithesis of heroism. Surely Mr. Parsons will agree when I say that the cause of any heroic action must be a virtuous one? If he does not agree then I say he has lost a distinction between right and wrong, fame and notoriety: and Mr. Ralph Nickleby shares with Wackford Sqeers, Esq., the place of hero in *Nicholas Nickleby*, who was doubtless a villain.

But the discussion of heroism is a digression (though rendered necessary by Mr. Parsons' assertions) from the original purpose of this correspondence. "Paradise Lost" is not a romance, was never intended as such by its author and should on no account be regarded as such by its critics. Milton's intention becomes clearer if his intensely religious background is considered. He set out to place the Bible's beginning on the same plane as that upon which Homer set the Greek legends, and throughout "Paradise Lost", like the far-off beating of loud surf, we can detect, above the raucous cacaphony set up by the fiend, "Jehovah thundering out of Sion". This voice is amplified to organic immensity by Milton's passionate religious conviction and the whole work becomes tragedy on the grand scale. Not only does it explain and amplify Genesis but it reflects through all ages the limitless folly of man, who, had he in the first place frequented more often that aforesaid ambrosial fount instead of tinkering with the forbidded tree would have avoided the whole calamity of Eden and preserved his wayward good sense in the juice of the grape whence neither his wife nor the devil could have extracted it.

PROSPER DAWDEN.

I should like you to know how much I value my membership of the Society. Its membership means very much to me, as I am somewhat isolated in matters of poetry, and it is always a great day when THE POETRY REVIEW arrives.—W. H. B. CUTTS, New Donnington.